



Bringing the Good News to Climbers

SRCFC Email Update - Volume 10, Number 11 (Issue #182)

August 4, 2009

Penalty Slack

By Calvin Landrus

Last fall, I worked an "uber-big" project for me on the Monkey Face at Smith Rock, OR. The route is the NW Passage and has three pitches of hard crack climbing in the easy 5.12 and upper 5.11 range and one short 5.11 bolted pitch to the top. I made good progress but didn't get it red-pointed before winter set in. Recently, I decided it was time to get back on and gave it a top-rope go. (You may be asking, how do you top-rope a multi-pitch climb? You climb an easy route to the top, rap-down and top-rope as you go.)

I was getting reacquainted with the 2nd and 3rd pitches in one long, 160 feet, top rope. (In the picture, the combined pitch goes from the right edge where the rock turns from red to tan and goes to the cave in the purple rock.) After about 30 feet of climbing, I came to where the belayer's side of the top-rope was running in groove. So I decided to clip the rope to a nearby bolt - it ran better - and I kept climbing. If you aren't laughing now, read on and find out why you should be.

I continued on up and I was pleasantly surprised to be climbing pretty well. It felt like I might get the 2nd and 3rd pitches together without hanning. After resting a bit under the last 20 feet of crux



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August 19-23

East Coast NC Adirondacks

September 10-13

West Coast NC

North Cascades, WA

September 11-12

Gathering at God's Lake, WI

September 19-20

CLIMB UP THE WORLD

September 19-20

Smith Rock Detour, OR (*participating as a sponsor*)

September 25-27

Horseshoe Canyon Ranch Climbing Marathon, AR (*participating as a sponsor*)

Dec. 29-Jan 3, 2010

3rd Annual SRCFC Mexico Conference at El Potrero Chico

Announcements

National Conferences

As is SRCFC's tradition to have National Conferences on the Coasts in "odd" years and one in the Rocky Mountain Region in "even" years, we are having our East Coast Conference, August 19-23, in the Adirondacks of New York and our West Coast Conference, September 10-13, in the North Cascades, Washington.

climbing, I started up. I was inching closer to easy ground, my focus completely on the climbing. I had no reason to be concerned for the rope was staying snug, going up as I went up.

My belayer's shouting, who was down around a corner and couldn't see me, slowly broke through. I looked down and saw a huge loop of slack on the belayer's side of the rope. My mind raced screaming this shouldn't be happening - what is my belayer doing! I shouted to Ryan (a great Christian brother from Bend) to take-up rope. He shouted back and said he couldn't. With my body shaking from the pump and long drop that awaited me, I couldn't figure out why. I shouted again, take up slack and the rope didn't move. That's when my error hit me - I had given myself PENALTY SLACK.

The knot of the two ropes tied together was now stuck in the quickdraw that I had clipped. The weight of the rope pulling down on the belayer's side, gave me a false sense of being belayed! My only option was to go back down, either by down climbing or falling. I tried down climbing but 5.11+ moves were too hard and I would be soon popping off 250 feet off the deck.

If you are unfamiliar with the term "penalty slack," let me enlighten you. It's often a taunt a top-rope belayer gives when the climber they're holding isn't climbing well enough, fast enough, etc. It's something that is threatened often but is never given. But on this day, my penalty slack was a self-inflicted wound and so was my impending going down.

As the time came to fall, my logic said everything would be fine but letting go was still a forced choice. The good news is that after about 25 feet, the fall ended. It was a soft catch because there was plenty of rope-stretch.

Why do I share this story? One is to give you a good laugh. Second, perhaps the story will keep you from making the same mistake. Finally, because of the life lesson it presents.

Often, we climb away from God's plan for us and we create our own "penalty slack." Often, we climb away from God's plan for us and we create our own "penalty slack." It might be outright sin or just going down a path we haven't done the "due-diligence" with God on. We find ourselves in a position where we are looking at a long fall. What are we to do? Fall into the gracious, soft catching belay of God. 1 Peter 5:5c-7 says, ***"God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.***

TRAINING: Form Follows Function

by Marc Heileman

National Conferences are traditionally our highest attended SRCFC events. At them, you will get to know Solid Rockers from across the country, receive teaching from the National Director on evangelism, experience worship and devotionals and hang out & climb together. There will be an outreach and/or service project as part of each conference. Please visit www.srcfc.org to sign-up.

24HHH Registration Open!

Don't miss out. As always, they'll cut it off at 200 climbers. No exceptions.... Visit: www.twofourhell.com

Become a Short-Term Missionary

On-the-Road or in the National Office, you can be on the cutting edge of outreach to climbers. Now is the time to act if you are interested in being an On-the-Road Missionary during the fall climbing season. If you want to challenge yourself, grow and be a missionary, request an informational packet and application by emailing National Office.

Website Hosts Needed!

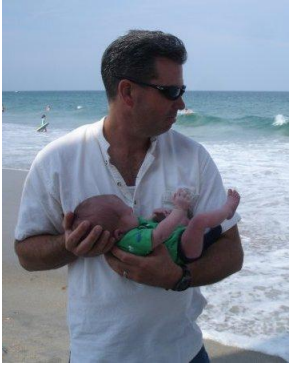
Our exciting new website will be launched in two phases. Soon, a brand new look will be released. (The more labor intensive social networking capacities will be added by the end of year.) For this to happen we need to transfer some of the content from our existing site to the new one. We will be using an easy content management system where updating the website will be more like desk-top publishing. We would like to have a team that will start with the transfer and then work on a regular basis to keep it current. If you are interested, please send an email to National Office.

[Community Announcements](#)

Follow the link above to read extra announcements listed below that are of a personal nature and/or not directly related to our mission.

Request to Pray and Post for Injured Climber

David Rogers who serves in the USAF and is an avid climber was critically injured in an auto accident in Germany May 26th. Read more at above link.



Introduction: Marc has been a competition climber and climbing hard (5.13s) since the 1990's, is a trained route-setter and fitness expert, owns a climbing wall construction company called Cliff Dweller and most importantly is a new father. See his more about him and his work at <http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=120516701336> or reach him at flyingspider@ymail.com.

Basically, this idea relates to "specificity of training." Let me illustrate: Even when I am in top climbing (gripping) shape, if I go downhill mountain biking, my forearms get sore from squeezing the brakes all afternoon! In the case of braking vs. climbing that's because braking is an isotonic movement that travels through a range of motion, but climbing requires the same grip muscles to work "isometrically" - holding a fixed position. Even though the muscles involved are the same, the way they are used is different enough that my muscles are not prepared for it.

In English, we see from the mountain biking example that the best way to be a better climber is through climbing. Not grip-building "squeeze machines," not pull ups, not anything else but climbing. Will these other things help? Perhaps. Will they make you send a higher letter grade? Almost certainly not. Climbing certainly will. To further illustrate, we all know that good climbers who can use their lower body effectively will climb harder grades, so since you are using your lower body, should we do work to build up our leg strength? No, because leg muscles are not the weakest link that makes us fall off the rock. They are just something we have to know how to use, not to build. Let's not confuse the need for utilization of a muscle with the need to build it up.

While we're discussing specificity, climbing also requires us to train the grip muscles in all positions if we want to be well-rounded. Even though crimps and pinches both require gripping forearm muscles, they use them in different enough ways that the benefits of training pinches does not fully carry over to crimpers, as you may have noticed!

Hans Florine once had the "F3" label sewn on clothing that he had made, because he knew that form does indeed follow function. In addition to what I just said in the last paragraph, what "F3" also means to him is that if you want your body to be capable of "A," then just keep doing "A" and your body will continue to be capable of "A" performance. In short, if you want to be a 47 year old who can repeatedly re-break your own speed records, then keep doing that! The fact that people stop doing what they used to do once they discover that they have a favorite chair is that....they stop doing what they used to do! Age is not the excuse they think it is.

Periodization - Timing Your Workouts and Your Rest:

Managing the timing of your catabolic workouts and your anabolic rest periods is called "periodization" and all intelligent athletes maximize the effects of the process. As climbers, who I believe are among the very most analytical of athletes, we should be doing this better than anyone, and I believe we as a group have been in recent years.

World champion bodybuilder Dorian Yates was the first to articulate and

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illustrate the effects of smart periodization in his field, which is of course a field from which we can all learn a lot about how muscles respond. He had already won the top contest several times, and so was already at a high level where dramatic additional improvement had slowed down. But when he returned one year to the Mr. Olympia contest to defend his title - he was at a much more massive bodyweight than just the last year. He had built a couple dozen pounds of LEAN, high quality muscle mass in that short of time, and he stunned the bodybuilding world with it. When asked how he did it, he said simply "I started working out less."

You see, before Dorian's effective use of rest periods, bodybuilders like Arnold had lived by the "more is better" approach. If bench presses were good, then 20 sets of it must be better. If three days a week of biceps training was good, then five days per week is even better. If steak and eggs build muscle, then I'll have a 10 egg omelet today! I am actually not exaggerating. Dorian had learned to let his body maximize the super compensation, anabolic process of rest, and he changed bodybuilding forever. Whether you like that look or not is irrelevant. The point is that we can see in the extremes of anything the easiest illustrations of what's effective.

To that end, look at the sheer mass and low body fat of body-builders today compared to those of the 70s. Yes, there are other factors too that have contributed to that, but most of those things were being done "back then" too. The variable in Dorian experience - and other people's experiences since, was REST.

How Do You Know if You're Overtraining?

Well, first of all, your performance will decrease. Or, you may improve somewhat (after all, our bodies are Designed to move, so anything is better than sitting on a couch) but you may not be improving your performance as well or as fast as you think you should be. Further, if your resting heart rate is faster than normal, that is a sign of overtraining. If in doubt, ease back - rather than ramp up - your training and see if you don't improve. My bet is that you will. Learn to listen to your body, through trial and error.

Training Volume = Intensity x Duration x Frequency:

"Training Volume" is the effective - or "net" - "amount" of exercise you do. Said another way, it's a way of expressing the sum total of the exercise you do. There is an actual formula, that goes like this: Total Volume of Training = Intensity x Duration x Frequency. In other words, you can increase the effectiveness of your workout by increasing how hard (intense) you work out; or by how long (duration) you work out; or by how often (frequently) you work out. If you have only 15 minutes to work out, you can get the sufficient training volume from that workout by increasing the intensity. Or if you want to do more frequent workouts that week, you can avoid overtraining by decreasing the intensity of each. Maybe you like going to the gym to see your friends more often, for example; or you are on a road trip and you don't want to have to find other things to do rather than climb - just to keep from overtraining. To avoid overtraining, maybe you should select routes that are below your difficulty threshold so you can climb on more days, saving hard redpoints for "max days." Often you'll climb a lot better with that approach anyway, and return home with some bigger numbers (and more routes logged) than usual.

How Many "Days On" for Climbing?

Try not to be that guy who climbs six days a week, and then is frustrated because you're not getting better. It's tempting to do that, as our sport is a lot of fun to do and is very social. But I have found that three days per week - four if one or two of those days is lower in intensity - keeps me optimally primed to send my hardest, and I know many climbers who are now only climbing twice per week.

Conclusion

You have to find the right combination of intensity and rest for both your body and for the type of climbing you are focusing on...Bouldering, Roped Difficulty Climbing, etc. You have to experiment to find out what is optimal for you, but I hope this article gives you a framework and a context to understand how and why your workouts are giving you the results that they are, and will give you the knowledge to make the appropriate adjustments.

Donation Information

If you would like to support the mission of Solid Rock with your financial resources, please send your donation to: SRCFC National Office, PO BOX 9831, Bend, OR 97708-9831. Visit www.srcfc.org/transactions for a response form to mail or email, and info on how to pay with check, credit card or PayPal. Solid Rock - Climbers for Christ is a California tax exempt, religious, non-profit corporation organized in accordance with IRS Sec. 501(c) (3). All donations in excess of the fair market of the goods and services you received (if any) are deductible.

WARNING!!!!

Activities described and depicted within this Email Update carry a significant risk of personal injury or death. Rock climbing, ice climbing, mountaineering, and all other outdoor activities are dangerous. Solid Rock - Climbers for Christ does not recommend that anyone participate in these activities unless they understand the risks involved, are experts, have qualified professional instruction, and are willing to personally assume all responsibility associated with those risks.