



**USA
CLIMBING**

Greetings,

In working through the process of updating the USA Climbing Rulebook for my first time, I want to take a minute to recognize those that worked so diligently to make this a reality. It is a tireless and often thankless job that is undertaken each year, and occasionally more than once each year, and it is a critical piece of making our sport run. A huge thank you to Chris Danielson and the entire Rules Committee for their dedication and attention to every last word in the Rulebook. Without their work we would not have consistent competitions with which to compete at. Finally, additional thanks are in order for the Judges Committee, the Board, and finally John Muse, our Director of Operations, without all of these individuals working together, updating the Rulebook simply would not happen. While I recognize rule changes can be concerning, rest assured this group always has the best long term interest of the sport in mind.

One of the areas not yet updated in the Rulebook for this season is the National Teams and International Competition section. I am working closely with the aforementioned parties to update this section to better align with the IFSC qualification criteria including Olympic Qualifying, best practices from other NGB's, and our own High Performance Plan that was recently presented to the US Olympic Committee. A number of items in this section are likely to be updated to address the reality of preparing for an Olympic Games. Some of those areas, while still supporting development, include creating opportunities to compete in the Olympic discipline, setting clear selection criteria for the coming season based on the Olympic discipline, allocation of resources to those most positioned for international success, and more. I understand these are significant changes and ask for your support as we look to address these critical areas to position our athletes for ongoing success. Look for updates to this critical area by October 1.

As always should you have any questions please feel free to contact me or any member of the USAC Team.

Best regards,

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USA Climbing faces many challenges as we aim to balance exciting yet complex developments in competition climbing. Working in the broad interest of our Competitor Members, the coaches and parents who work closely with them, and our constantly improving High Performance goals, each year we adapt as competition climbing evolves. Additionally, when considering changes to USA Climbing policies or rules, we consider our strong relationships with the host facilities that make USA Climbing events possible, our passionate and hard-working officials and volunteers, and the operational capacity of our staff. The following summarizes important changes for the 2018-2019 season and we would like to thank the USA Climbing Staff, Rules Committee, and Board of Directors for all the hard work as we begin an exciting new year.

- *John Muse, Director of Operations, and Chris Danielson, Chair of Rules Committee*

Introductory Membership

With the 2018-2019 Climbing Season, we have replaced the \$10 Day Membership with a \$20 Introductory (“Intro”) Membership. The Day Membership, because it was valid for only one day/competition, always presented a challenge for parents, competitors, and officials. The Intro Membership has no such short expiration and is valid for the entire 2018-2019 Climbing Season. An Intro Membership is valid for unlimited Local competitions in the Bouldering, Sport & Speed, and Collegiate series during the 2018—2019 season. It is also valid for unlimited National Cups Series events. However, like the Day Membership last season, the new Intro Membership is not applicable for Championship (Regional, Divisional, or National) competitions, which require a USA Climbing Competitor Membership. Our hope is that climbing will become more accessible for individuals wanting to participate at Local competitions and adult-age competitors interested in the National Cup Series, but who may not have the desire to compete in Championship level events and that this change will also relieve the stress sometimes associated in the past with purchasing a Day Membership at each Local competition.

Collegiate Membership and Regional/Divisional Registration Fees

There is an increase in the Collegiate Membership fee (\$55) and to registration fees associated with Regional (Youth \$125 / Collegiate \$65), Divisional (Youth \$150) and Collegiate National Championships (\$150). We always consider any such changes carefully; in this case there has been no increase to these fees within the last 3 years. We continue to strive for the best organized events and we anticipate the increase in fees to have a direct impact in a number of areas within USA Climbing that will have a trickle-down effect to all of our stakeholders.

Advancement to Championship Level Competitions

For this season we are introducing an additional requirement for competitors to qualify to the Youth Regional Championships. As in the past, to be eligible competitors will have to participate in two Youth Locals but now will also have to rank Top 20 in at least one USAC Youth Local (Top 20 does not include “extra quota” competitors – see Rule 3.9.1). The new rules also outline that at least four Locals should be scheduled in each Region and in the event less than four Locals are held in a Region, this “Top 20” part of 3.9.1 will not apply to competitors in that Region. As in the past, an international competition may count towards the two local participation requirement, but a competitor must still finish Top 20 in at least one USAC youth local competition.

Originally made as a recommendation to the Board of Directors in the summer of 2017, the implementation of this modest change comes after years of assessing growth, listening to feedback from various stakeholders (including Regional Coordinators, coaches, host facilities, and athletes), and doing research on participation at both Youth Locals and Regionals. We consider this to be both a minimal structural change for this season and a shift as part of an important broader strategic direction for USA Climbing. While in the past the Local to Regional advancement requirements have reflected a very open

approach to the first tier of Championship level events, and in general we also want to encourage participation, the Regional level is a *Championship* level event, and having those minimal “participation-only” requirements does not necessarily support our broader High Performance goals of developing the best athletes, and also managing our growth in a constructive way operationally.

We understand that a concern may be what the practical implications are. While looking at participation data, we considered “Top 40,” or even the other extreme, of “Top 10,” as a requirement for rank placement at a Local. We found that “Top 40” would not be likely to affect participation at Youth Regionals at all, and “Top 10” might mean excluding 15 – 20% of competitors this year, when compared to previous seasons, where some categories, within some Regions, could be greater. With “Top 20” as the rank, and the requirement being to finish Top 20 also *only in one* Local, we anticipate the change to have only minimal effect (5 – 10%) on overall participation at Youth Regional Championships across the country this year. In this sense the change is meant to be modest, but in the interest of beginning broader steps for the future. In 2018-2019, there may be some Youth Regional Championships where no change in participation is anticipated when compared to prior years, whereas those Regions that have grown very quickly and do have greater challenges with overcrowding, can likely expect the new rule to have a modest affect.

We did also consider several other approaches and in future years we do expect further changes. Locals may become more meaningful to advancing to the Championship level and we may explore other options structurally with the hope to always improve the balance of goals for High Performance, operational constraints for competitions, and opportunities for new climbers to be introduced to the sport in positive ways. To that end, the USA Climbing Realignment Task Force has already begun and will continue to work over the coming months to assess current and future patterns of, and standards for, participation. The Task Force will work with Rules Committee and others to ultimately provide recommendations for future seasons that we will consider in depth.

Team Championships Youth and Collegiate

With respect to Youth Teams, we have added the “Overall” Youth Team Championship award at the end of the year. (“Overall” is considered its own discipline, as a combination of all three traditional disciplines - Boulder, Sport and Speed.) At the end of the Sport/Speed Youth Nationals, this additional award based on adding the scores of each of the Boulder, Sport, and Speed National Youth Team Championships will be given, for the best Youth Team in the “Overall.” Additionally, for Collegiate Teams, there will be Collegiate Team Championships awarded at Collegiate Regional and National Championships for each traditional discipline – Boulder, Sport and Speed, and as with Youth Teams, an Overall Collegiate Team Championship will be awarded from adding combining the scores of the individual discipline Collegiate Team Championships.

Field of Play

Rules 6.18.1, 6.18.2, and 6.18.3 pertaining to “control” have been updated, eliminating the reference to two seconds, and making clear that control “is determined by evaluating the climbing position of the competitor and use of the handhold.” One significant change is that a competitor is no longer awarded control for only touching a handhold simply to receive points but without clearly making an effort to progress. Further, the two-hand control of the finish handhold in bouldering is defined separately from other handholds.

These changes are meant to provide clarity and clarification for judges and athletes alike, with consistency of rulings on control. Other less impactful revisions or clarifications regarding the field of play have also been made and we encourage all athletes, coaches, and officials to review the “Significant Changes” section of the Rulebook and the individual Rules for more information.