

OCF BOULDERING RULES SUMMARY (2021-2022)

Overview

The Ontario Climbing Federation (the OCF) is non-profit corporation operated by an elected Board of Directors that are all volunteers.

The OCF is a member of Climbing Escalade Canada (the CEC), which is the National Sport Organization (NSO) for competitive climbing. The CEC is a member of the International Federation of Sport Climbing (the IFSC), which is the international sport organization for competitive climbing.

The primary focus of the OCF is to organize a competitive climbing series (called the Series).

The Series includes local and provincial events in the three disciplines of bouldering (no ropes), difficulty (ropes) and speed (racing up the wall).

We published our own comprehensive rules in 2019, and recently updated them for the 2021-2022 season. Our rules are based on the IFSC and CEC rules, as well as our own past practices. These rules will be used for our Series.

Our Series provides Ontario climbers with the only pathway from local events, to provincial events, to regional events, to national events, to international events, and even to Olympic events.

In fact, the first Canadian climber to compete at an Olympic event was an OCF member from the Ottawa area who competed at the 2018 Youth Olympics in Argentina.

Many other organizations, groups and climbing gyms host very well run, and very exciting competitions. However, those events are not required to use a standard set of rules and practices, and those events are not steps along that pathway to higher level sanctioned events.

Officials

There are five primary officials that help run each OCF Series competition:

The Event Organizer is the main person from the host gym who is responsible for ensuring that the facility is prepared to host the event.

The Head Route Setter is responsible for planning all aspects of setting for the competition, including safety, difficulty levels, and the sequence of each round.

The OCF Technical Delegate (TD) is responsible for most of the pre-competition organization such as registration, the schedule, and running orders (called Start Lists). The TD also ensures that the video and timing systems are set up properly and that scoring and results are done properly.

The OCF Jury President (JP) is responsible for ensuring the competition runs as safely and as fairly as possible. The JP has the sole authority to interpret our rules, and also deals with all appeals, any discipline issues, as well as anything that may result in a competitor getting extra attempts (called Technical Incidents).

The OCF Head Judge (HJ) is appointed to our larger competitions to assist the JP in their duties.

However, those five people cannot run a competition, not even close. We actually need over 400 hours of volunteer work for a two day bouldering competition. So if you are reading this, we need you to volunteer at one of our events this season in some capacity.

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Formats

The OCF uses one of three formats for our bouldering competitions:

Redpoint Scramble

We use this format at some of our recreational events.

The competitors can watch each other climb.

The competitors can try the problems in any order they want.

Usually, the competitors can try the problems as many times as they want, time permitting.

This type of competition usually uses a progressive points system, where as the problems get harder, they are worth more points, and taking extra attempts reduces the points earned a little bit.

The competitors judge themselves, or are judged by other competitors (called peer judging).

The competition is pretty relaxed and the focus is on the fun.

There is no video system and there are very few appeals.

These competitions are usually run by the host gym.

These competitions are not part of the OCF Competitive Series.

Judged Scramble

We use this format for some of our local Series competitions.

The competitors can watch each other climb.

The competitors can try the problems in any order they want.

The competitors are judged by OCF volunteer judges.

The rules about how you start and finish a problem are followed very closely.

Each problem has an assigned point value, and there is small deduction for each extra attempt it takes to complete (Top) the problem. (If you watch the OCF boulder judging video you should see some info about Zone Holds. There are no Zone Holds on problems in our scramble comps.)

These competitions are 1.5 to 3.0 hours long.

Each competitor can try each of the problems a maximum of 8 times, time permitting.

Competitors cannot get instructions about how to climb a problem (called beta) while they are on the wall. However, they can talk to their coaches and parents between attempts about their climb.

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Onsight

This format is used for all Series competitions involving our older categories, and for every category at our Provincial Championships.

Competitors are kept in an Isolation Zone prior to their attempt(s).

Only certified coaches, competitors and OCF officials are allowed into the Isolation Zone.

Competitors do not get to see their problems before climbing.

Competitors are not allowed to watch other competitors before their attempt(s).

Competitors may ask their judge a question that pertains only to an issue such as the boundaries of a problem (if any), the status of a feature, hold or volume, or confirm which hold is the Zone Hold.

No one is allowed to give any instructions (beta) about how to climb a problem to any competitor.

If someone is not following the rules about no beta, the JP or Head Judge should be notified. It is their job to deal with those kinds of issues.

Competitors are scored using the Top/Zone scoring format that is also used by the CEC and the IFSC for all of their sanctioned competitions. (More on that later.)

Competitors climb in a pre-determined order, called the Start List.

Competitors climb each new problem in a pre-determined order.

There are five problems for each category in the Qualification Round.

The top 6-12 competitors in each category from the Qualification Round advance to the Final Round.

There are four problems for each category in the Final Round.

Each competitor gets five minutes to try each boulder in each Round.

Each competitor can make as many attempt as they choose during that time period.

Each competitor gets a five minute rest period between each problem, plus if they finish the problem early (called a Top) they would get to rest for whatever part of their climbing time they did not use.

Competitors leave Isolation and start climbing in five minute intervals until the last climber is done.

So there would be climbers at every boulder problem during most of each round.

This format works like clockwork. Every five minutes there are a bunch of competitors resting, and another bunch starting their attempts on their problem.

There can be up to ten climbers on the wall at once, but they all should be on the same clock.

In this format you need at least one judge for every problem, and if there are new people volunteering as judges, we pair them up with more experienced volunteer judges.

We also need volunteers to help in the Isolation Zone, do scoring, work as runners, and even be problem brushers. So even if you are not keen about being a judge, we still need your help.

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Judging / Scoring

We use the same rules for judging and scoring at all of our Series competitions.

This includes what parts of the wall are out of bounds, how a problem must be started, how the competitor gets credit for the Zone Hold, and how the competitor finishes (or Tops) a problem.

The judge at each problem will watch the competitor at their problem for the entire climbing period.

This is done to ensure that the competitor is following all the rules, including the rules about only touching certain holds before leaving the ground, and the rules about not watching other climbers.

The judge must ensure that the competitor starts the problem using all four points of contact properly, and then uses only those holds, features, and surfaces that are in for that problem.

Black tape is used to mark holds/areas that are out of bounds.

The judge should call down any climber who does not start a problem properly, or uses any hold, feature or surface that is out.

All of those things count the same as falling (called an Unsuccessful Attempt).

The judge will record the result of every attempt on the OCF scoresheet. This will include every unsuccessful attempt, which includes every fall onto the mats, every time the competitor Controls the Zone Hold, and when the competitor Tops the problem.

In simple terms, Control means that the competitor held onto the Zone Hold with at least one hand in such a way that the Zone Hold helped them stay on the wall for some visible period of time. So that means that just reaching out with one finger and touching or tapping the Zone Hold is not Control, touching the Zone Hold with a foot is not Control, and slapping the Zone Hold as you fall is not Control.

As for earning a Top, the competitor must match the marked finish hold with both hands with Control to earn a Top, and this must be done before their climbing time expires.

It is the judge's job to determine whether the competitor earned the Zone Hold, and also whether the competitor earned the Top, not the coaches or spectators.

However, we do have use a video recording system and a comprehensive appeal system at most of our competitions, so if anyone thinks that a judge has made a mistake, there is a way to check.

However, arguing with the judge will not be tolerated. The OCF wants everyone at our events to enjoy themselves, especially our volunteers, so the JP should be notified if someone is being rude or disrespectfully toward any of our volunteers.

Conclusion

Please note that the entire judging and scoring process is demonstrated in our bouldering video, which is on our website. Anyone who wants a better understanding of how this work should check out it.

Coaches, athletes, really keen parents and all prospective or newer judges should also review the relevant sections of our published rules, including section 3, section 10, and section 11. Those are on our website too.