



AAC Publications

Milestones

Ground-breaking performances on shorter routes in 2020

At the start of 2020, many of the world's top rock climbers were training for the Olympic Games, scheduled to begin in Tokyo in July. By March, COVID-19 had postponed the Olympics and forced most climbers into lockdown. With eased restrictions in the summer and fall, European climbers began to venture outdoors (though few traveled far). Their indoor training clearly paid off, with several milestones achieved at the crags. Here, we offer some highlights from 2020 (and one from 2019) to provide context for the year's longer routes, reported elsewhere in the 2021 AAJ.

Jacopo Larcher on Tribe in Cadarese, Italy, a strong contender for the world's hardest traditional rock climb. Photo by Paolo Sartori

MARCH 2019

Jacopo Larcher (Italy, age 29 at the time) redpointed a 30m traditionally protected pitch in Cadarese, Italy, that he named Tribe. The route is poorly protected in the easier first section, with better protection for the bouldery cruxes higher up. Larcher, who has redpointed 5.15a on bolt-protected climbs, did not grade Tribe but said it felt like the hardest climb he had done. In October 2020, James Pearson (U.K.) repeated the route. Pearson, who has climbed 9a sport routes, also declined to rate Tribe but said it had the hardest series of moves he had done on either traditionally protected or bolted rock.

JULY 2020

Laura Rogora (19) from Italy redpointed Ali Hulk Sit Extension Total (9b/5.15b) in Rodellar, Spain, becoming the second woman to free a 9b sport climb. In November, Julia Charnourdie (24, France) became the third, redpointing Eagle 4 (9b) at Saint-Léger-du-Ventoux in her home country.

AUGUST 2020

German climber Alex Megos (27) completed Bibliographie at Ceüse, France, and graded it 9c (5.15d), the second route in the world given this rating, after Adam Ondra's Silence, climbed at Flatanger, Norway, in 2017. Megos started working on the new route (originally bolted by American Ethan Pringle) in September 2017, but he put most of his effort into it during two visits in the summer of 2020, for a total of about 60 days of work on the climb.

DECEMBER 2020

Angela "Angy" Eiter, the first woman to redpoint 9b (5.15b), with La Planta de Shiva in Spain, in October 2017, achieved a new milestone three years later, in December 2020: a 9b first ascent by a woman. Eiter (34) redpointed Madame Ching near her home in Imst, Austria; the route had been bolted by her husband as a gift to her. Madame Ching had about 100 moves for Eiter, and she said it felt similar in style and difficulty to La Planta de Shiva.

Also in December, the International Olympic Committee announced that climbing would be part of the Olympic Games in Paris in 2024. The field of climbers will expand, and the lead-boulder-speed combined medals planned for the 2020/2021 Tokyo Games were jettisoned in favor of individual medals for speed climbing and a combined lead and bouldering competition in Paris.

Images



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Article Details

Author	Dougald MacDonald
Publication	AAJ
Volume	63
Issue	95
Page	10
Copyright Date	2021
Article Type	Feature article