

Sport Climbing in Spain

And Trad in the UK

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In 2010 I applied for an MCoFS bursary in order to go on a 6 week sport climbing trip to Catalunya in Spain. I would be spending part of the time staying with Tom Bolger and gaining a lot of experience from climbing with him.

The main objectives of the trip were:

- To gain more experience of sport climbing and climb my first 8a
- To use my experience of sport climbing to improve my indoor competition climbing
- To use this experience to improve my trad climbing which is my favourite type of climbing

Four weeks before the trip I discovered I had tendonitis in both elbows and thought it would have to be cancelled, however after a number of acupuncture and physiotherapy sessions the elbows were feeling better. I was under strict instructions not to climb on anything steep so thought my dream of climbing an 8a was fading fast.

The first part of the trip was about getting used to climbing on rock again after a long winter lay off and finding out what level of climbing my elbows would tolerate. I climb lots of 6b to 7a+ routes around Santa Linya and Siruana which were really enjoyable and had no complaints from the elbows.

Deciding to crank it up a gear we went to Rodellar where I managed to flash Sopas de ajo F7b+ and onsight Iron Man R1 F7b+. Due to this success I decided to try something a bit steeper and had to have 4 days off climbing due to the pain in my elbows – lesson learned.

I still wanted to climb an 8a and show the MCoFS that their faith in my ability was not displaced. Tom, Neil McGeek and I put our heads together to find a route that would suit and McGeek came up with Thia Dreams at Santa Linya. This route was a vertical, slabby crimp fest and very technical. I looked at it and thought I would be able to climb it, but not first time. I got on the route with McGeek belaying, the route felt very comfortable and I was able to carefully work out all the moves with a bit of help from McGeek. I was astonished to see the chains just a couple of moves away and tried not to get too excited at the idea that I was going to flash the first 8A I had tried. I took it carefully and clipped the chains, job done, it was a great feeling.



Thia Dreams

The rest of the trip was spent at Margalef which was my favourite climbing area; I climbed some amazing routes, classics of the area in the 7b to 7c+ range.

My favourites were:

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| <i>Margalef Festa fotre</i> | F7c | (flash) |
| <i>Aeroplastica R1_</i> | F7c+ | (Red Point) |
| <i>Collons Pelats</i> | F7c | (onsight) |
| <i>Collons Plens</i> | F7b+ | (Red Point) |
| <i>Sopas de ajo</i> | F7b | (flash) |

All in the entire trip was a success despite the elbow problems.

Once home it was back to the physiotherapist who told me I would not be able to compete for the rest of the competition season which was really disappointing as I had hoped to get back into some hard training so I could compete at the Worlds in Ratho and the European Youth Competitions again.

I did manage to get out and do some trad climbing although not as much as I would have liked due to spending most of the summer at the physio or in the gym going through an intense programme of exercises to make sure the tendonitis was fixed for good.

I spent some time at Reiff in the summer my favourite climbing area and felt more confident in my trad climbing due to the experience in Spain, I was more aware of my own ability and able to make better judgements on what moves were doable and what were not.

I climbed at Minch wall which was an area of Reiff I had not been to before. My favourite routes were:

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|------------------------|-----------------|
| <i>Sexcrementalism</i> | E1 5b (onsight) |
| <i>Clam Jam</i> | E1 5b (onsight) |

I managed a trip to Northumberland with friends and managed to flash Lost Cause (E4 6b) which for me was the highlight of the year.

The final trad trip of the year was to Red Craigs at Glen Clova where I onsighted Rocketman (E3 5b) which was a good way to end the season, it was not the extended hard trad climbing season I had hoped for after all the effort in Spain, but it was fun.

Thanks to the MCoFS for their support, if it had not been for that I would not have been able to stay in Spain for the full six weeks. I learned a lot during that trip and after, especially about how to climb hard with injuries (pick your routes carefully and listen to what your body is telling you) and how to cope with a long layoff from competition climbing without getting too frustrated.

I finally got the all clear from the physiotherapist on the 24 December 9 months after the tendonitis started – a nice Christmas present. I am really looking forward to another year of sport and trad climbing and continuing to improve my climbing both indoors and out (but especially out).



Lost Cause E4 6b

END