

**Name:** Rachel Carr

**History:** I was first selected for the GB Youth Climbing Team 2010. At that point there was only a lead climbing team. Over the next 3 years I achieved selection for a few European Youth Leading Competitions climbing in Vienna, Kranj, Edinburgh, Imst and Gemozac. My highest ranking was 15<sup>th</sup> in Youth A girls at Edinburgh EYC in May 2012 and I finished that year with a World ranking of 47<sup>th</sup>.

In 2013 a GB Youth Bouldering Team was established and I was one of only two Scots invited to be part of the 14 strong team. In 2013 I have attended all the European competitions climbing in Grindelwald, Sofia, L'Argentiere and Laval. At the end of a great first year for the GB Youth Bouldering team I am currently ranked 13<sup>th</sup> in the World within the Youth A Girls category. In addition to the competitions abroad I have also been competing in a number of Senior level competitions in the UK pitting myself against members of the GB Senior team and climbers from other countries.

As well as competing and training myself I also mentor some younger climbers. I find this very rewarding and have learnt a lot from this interaction. In addition I have offered to organise a group trip so that pupils at my school can participate in the Scottish Schools' competition as none of the teachers have shown an interest.

During 2013 I have achieved the following competition successes:-

<b>Competition</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Result</b>
Feb 2013 – Irish Junior (under 18) Bouldering Championships	Dublin	1 <sup>st</sup>
Feb 2013 – Irish Senior Bouldering Championships	Dublin	1 <sup>st</sup>
Mar 2013 – International Open Bouldering Festival (Senior event)	Climbing Works, Sheffield	8th
May 2013 - Scottish Youth Bouldering Championship Youth A (16/17)	Glasgow	1 <sup>st</sup>
May 2013 – British Junior Bouldering Championship (R2) Youth A (16/17)	Glasgow	3rd
May 2013 - Youth A (16/17) European Youth Bouldering Championships	Grindelwald, Switzerland	35 <sup>th</sup>
June 2013 - Youth A (16/17) European Youth Bouldering Cup	Sofia, Bulgaria	14th
July 2013 - Senior British Bouldering Championships	Sheffield	15th
July 2013 - Youth A (16/17) European Youth Bouldering Cup	L'Argentiere, France	19th
August 2013 - British Junior Bouldering Championship (overall) Youth A (16/17)	Leeds	6 <sup>th</sup> (as unable to compete in 3 <sup>rd</sup> round through injury)
Oct 2013 - Youth A (16/17) European Youth Bouldering Cup	Laval, France	13 <sup>th</sup> (also ranked 13 <sup>th</sup> in Europe and World for Youth A in 2013)
Nov 2013 – G Force Senior Open Bouldering Competition	Dublin	1 <sup>st</sup>
Nov 2013 – Irish Lead Climbing Senior Championships	Dublin	2 <sup>nd</sup>

2014 sees my final year at school and before I start at college in the Autumn I hope to visit a number of top European outdoor bouldering locations to take my indoor skills onto rock.

I've been keeping a blog over the past few months. if you'd like to find out a bit more here are some of the articles I have written following my team outings.



## My First CWIF Foray

This was the first year I had even thought about going to CWIF (Climbing Works International Festival). I didn't expect to do well; I was treating it as a fun comp thinking I wouldn't get higher than 20<sup>th</sup>. I still trained hard, doing extra gym sessions and focusing on all my weaknesses. I wanted to be the best I could, but I definitely didn't think it was good enough to be the best junior at the comp.

My main competitors were, Gracie, Molly and Tara. They were the three that I thought I had a chance of beating, although I never thought I would. I showed up on the day, stressed out because my train had been late and my taxi driver had never heard of the Works,

which shocked me if I'm honest. I was competing in the afternoon session but had headed along early to see some people on the problems and give my team a bit of support. I had been given the chance to be on the Metolius/prAna team, which was an incredible achievement for me as it gave me the opportunity to climb with some of the best boulderers in the UK, Nathan Phillips, Dave Barrens and Tom Bonnert. At first glance the problems looked ok but it wasn't till I watched people on them that I realised they were a lot harder than they seemed.

After the morning session was finished I was quick to speak to Nathan and get some of the key beta from him. He walked round the boulders with me and Tom and made them sound way too easy. I started warming up then moved onto the first problems. I managed to top 9 first go and get one on my third go after slipping of stupidly twice. I had fallen off a problem and realised I suddenly had a pain in my upper thigh, it was sore to lift it, which made climbing a little tricky, but I wasn't going to give up. I got through all the problems I thought I had a chance at, but didn't want to risk further injury on any of the more impossible ones. At the end of the day I was sure I'd finished at least 20<sup>th</sup>. I certainly didn't expect to see my name in the list for the semis.

I had qualified in 16<sup>th</sup> which was ok, but I didn't expect to improve on my rank. I showed up Sunday morning stricken with nerves, my stomach was churning. We went into isolation and I was glad to discover that I was 5<sup>th</sup> out; it meant I could get all the climbing over with quickly so I wouldn't have to suffer much longer. I warmed up calmly but it was when I was told I had 5 minutes before I had to go out that the nerves came back and I could hardly breathe. I'd been in finals before but never a semi-final this big, never against world class climbers. If Nathan hadn't spoken to me and told me I'd be fine I think I would have been too nervous to climb. I was called out with Chris Webb Parsons and walked round to sit facing the massive crowd that would soon be watching me attempt to keep my dignity.

When it was time I turned round and looked at the first problem. A slab. Just what I need. The moves looked simple but there were two moves that involved lifting my injured leg higher than it could go without being agonisingly painful. I jumped on, literally jumping for the first two holds as they were designed to be tricky to reach. I caught them, moved swiftly through the next moves and suddenly realised that I was at the top. I'd flashed the first problem, easily. I was shocked and struggled to control the smile that was growing increasingly on my face. I waited impatiently for my 5 minutes and the next to finish and then jumped up to see my next problem. It looks ok with one awkward match on an ok undercut. I got on made the first few moves and reached the bonus and then jumped but couldn't catch the second last hold. I repeated it several times but no luck. I didn't have the strength to control the swing and stick the move. My five minutes finished and I sat waiting again for the next 5 minutes. The third problem turned out to be quite the struggle for me. I had no skin left on my fingers and I had to catch a gritty volume. I fell off the second move several times until I decided that my skin had taken too much of a beating to be put through any more pain. I sat down for the final 5 minutes disappointed with the 2 previous performances. Finally it was time. I looked at the problem and was happy. Finally a shoulder problem, something I could do. The first few moves were awkward as you practically had to campus, of which I am not a fan. I fell off the first time because of a slip, but managed to get the bonus and the third last hold on the problem, if my heel hadn't slipped I would have held it, but doubt I would have held the last hold, it looked grim. I didn't have the energy to get to the same point again and admitted defeat with ten seconds left on the clock.

I was finished. All the problems were done and I was completely out of energy. I went to sit with my friends thinking I had done pretty badly but then they told me I'd beaten most of the girls on the problems. I was pretty happy. Never before had I beaten Molly or Tara and I finally had confidence in my ability to climb well. I stayed to watch all of the climbers try the problems to see where I would finish and after being slightly relieved that I wouldn't have to hurt my leg anymore by competing in the finals I was glad to discover that not only was I 8<sup>th</sup> but I was the best junior climber out of the whole competition. It was one of the best weekends of my climbing career and I am more than psyched to make it to the finals next year.

## European Youth Bouldering Championships in Grindelwald

It was this time last week that I began my journey to Gatwick where I would meet the Junior GB Bouldering team and leave for our first ever European. I didn't know what to expect, whether I would be good enough, or how I would react in the new situation. When I met up with the team at the hotel we were all pretty psyched. It was a long journey to get to Grindelwald, almost 12 hours, but it was worth it.

Two plane journeys, 3 trains and 1 quick car journey and we were at the hotel, right at the bottom of the Eiger. The scenery was beautiful and I was glad to see our hotel room looked comfortable because I really needed a good night's sleep after getting up at 5 that morning. We had a team chat to decide what we do about going to registration or not and we all chose to go along and see who we'd be competing against. We ate first in the centre and watched all the teams show up one by one to register. I recognised some of the competitors from lead competitions and even the Denmark team that I had previously met in Font. After registering some of us went back to the hotel to get our bags ready and have a bit of a relax so we wouldn't get stressed before the comp. Nathan, Tom and Michelle all stayed for the technical meeting to give us the information later on. After playing a few card games and double-checking our kit for Saturday Tom returned to give us another team chat and tell us any final rules.



The next day we woke up sharp at 8 and headed for breakfast. Tom thought it would be a good idea if we had a bit of time in the morning just to relax so that we wouldn't stress out about the comp. This really helped me as it was so different to all the lead competitions. We watched a bit of German TV and played more card games. For some reason playing really quick, high-intensity card games took the pressure of the comp. My Youth A Girls category was to start at 12:30 and was the first category for our team. We headed to the wall for half ten to scope out the climbs and watch the youth B boys as we knew we would have some of the same problems. When we started warming up the area was almost empty but by about 20 minutes before starting time the warm up zone was filled with our competitors, at this point I was glad to have Gracie and Tara with me as it was nice to see familiar faces in a crowd of unusual ones. With 15 minutes to go before the start we headed to the competition area to see what problems would be ours and for Tom to give us some last minute motivation.

Our 2 hour qualification time began. Gracie and I managed to be first and second on problem 5. Gracie went first and fell off a crossover move, I went on and did the same but looking back I think I could have made it if I had more confidence. We worked our way through the problems, not always together, but still helping each other with beta. I managed to reach the final move on the slab 3 times but didn't trust my foot enough to get right into the wall so just missed the last hold. That raised my confidence as I knew I'd beaten a few girls by getting closer to the hold, even though I knew it wouldn't show in the results. I got 5 bonuses overall but I didn't top any. I wasn't disappointed as I knew no one ever does well in their first comp. It was a totally new atmosphere and I just wasn't used to it yet. I made it to the last move on 3 of the problems and made it past the crux on 2 of the others. I was pleased with how well I did on each problem and knew that the main reason I'd fallen off them was because my foot had slipped and not because I lacked the capability. I finished 31<sup>st</sup> out of 45. If I had topped 1 I would have been 27<sup>th</sup> and if I had topped 2 I would have come top 25. I know I have the ability to get top 25 next time and I'm already working on my weaknesses.

Hopefully next time I'll have a better mind-set and I'll be able to move through the hard moves first time. It was such a good atmosphere with the team the whole weekend; everyone was so relaxed and had fun the whole time. We were focused when we needed to be and everyone made sure that no one got stressed out. Tom was really good at talking us through and gave me some great feedback. It was always so positive and I know next time the whole team will improve and I know we can only get better from here. I'm so psyched for Bulgaria, it can't come quick enough.

## EYBC - Round 1 Sofia – Team Challenges

This time yesterday I was sitting in Gatwick airport waiting for my flight home after one of the most life changing experiences of my life. The first round of the European Youth Bouldering Cup and the second European trip of the British Junior Bouldering Team. We spent 5 days in Sofia, tanning, burning, climbing and cheering. This comp was different to Grindelwald as there were 73 competitors in total and only 17 in my category, compared to the previous 45.

I knew the comp wasn't going to be easy, after all it was the top 17 competitors in Europe that I was up against I wasn't expecting a great result but I knew that it didn't matter where I came as long as I climbed at my best.

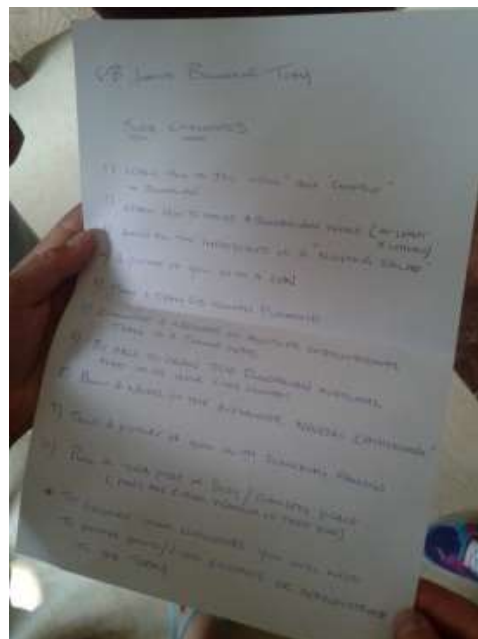
The day we arrived we went to check out the wall and buy me some makeup and mouthwash since I had forgotten to pack my toiletries bag. The Wall was incredible; the shape was so different and the walls had lights in them which made it look ten times better than any other. After scoping it out we headed back to our hotel to relax. We'd flown out a day earlier this time so we wouldn't be so tired so we weren't really worrying about the comp at this point. The next day we went into the town and looked at the sites. Tom had given us a list of challenges to do on the trip just for fun and we started on them in our pairs.

We did a yoga pose in a busy place that got us a few strange looks; we made a human pyramid which wasn't that easy, and then we watched as everyone's shoulders slowly became redder (although that wasn't one of the challenges). After lunch we headed to the park near the mall to chill out and give me and Sid a chance at tanning. We didn't. We saw the German team while we were there and Gracie, Nathan and I went to talk to the manager which got me psyched as I realised how close and fun the comp was becoming.

After we got back to the hotel with all our sunburn and hilarious tan lines, Tom gave us a team chat and we organised what time we would all head to the comp. Sid and James were climbing in the morning because they were youth B and the rest of us were from 2 onwards. Tom said it was ok for us to head later on so we can get a better sleep and be more awake for competing but we all wanted to support Sid and James so we headed for just after 10 to see the end of Sid's qualifiers. Me and Gracie looked at all the problems and got a feel for the style. I felt a lot more chilled as I thought I should be able to top a few of them this time. When it came to time to warm up we were all in trousers and I started to realise just how bad the heat was. I had to change to shorts and I was still overheating while climbing. I knew it wasn't going to be easy to do well in this heat. I took a short break and then did another bit of warming up but I felt really shaky and weak all of a sudden and got worried that something was wrong.

The qualifiers began, Youth A girls were mixed with Junior girls since the categories were so small. I got on problem 2 first and after a few slips and hand pops I managed to make it to the last move but I couldn't keep my foot on and got so boxed that I had to drop off. I decided to move on to another problem as I only had an hour left. I went on problem one and my hands were so sweaty that I couldn't make the last move. I was so disheartened after that as I'd seen so many people flash it and I knew I should. I got back on it and thankfully got it. I was so happy to get my first European top but I was still disappointed that I hadn't flashed it. I worked my way through the rest of the problems and made the last move on another problem. The time went by so fast and I didn't get enough attempts to top them. There were a total of 3 I could have topped as well as the one I did. I was 14<sup>th</sup> overall and managed to beat 2 people I didn't expect to. I was disappointed at first but then I realised that it didn't matter that I didn't top them, it mattered that I could have. Nathan made it to the final and it was incredible to watch him do so well the next day. I really felt the team spirit while we all crowded on one mat screaming till our throats were sore. We were all so proud of Nathan, and of our friend from the Irish team Dom (Burns) who came first in his category. The team became a lot closer on this trip as we gave each other nick names and shared jokes and advice. I'm so proud to be part of it and I can't wait to climb with them all again next week at the senior BBC's.

On the flight back Tom told me that the only thing holding me back was the fact I didn't believe in myself. I was happiest at the moment because I realised that I did deserve to be competing, was currently ranked 14<sup>th</sup> in Europe and Tom was right. I'll be training my mind for the next comp; I have more belief and confidence in my ability now than I have since I started climbing. I'm ready to start showing what I can really do and prove that I can make top 20 in World.



## When your luck runs out – dig in.

I've been climbing for a little over 5 years and until now I'd never sustained an injury. I've had a few tweaks and split tips, but nothing that has actually prevented me climbing before. This is my first physical hurdle and I am determined not to let it stop me.

On the 28<sup>th</sup> of July I woke up and got ready for what I thought would be a really good opportunity for my training. It was the end to an amazing 10 days which had started with the trip to L'Argentiere in France for the second EYBC round where the whole team improved on their performances and team captain Nathan Philips gained Team GB's first youth bouldering medal. Tom Greenall (GB Youth Bouldering Team manager) had arranged for the Youth A and Junior members of the team to train with GB Senior Bouldering Team as they prepared for the final rounds of the World Cup. We showed up at Nottingham Depot and saw the blocs, they looked sick. We were warming up and I felt strong. I was doing well and climbing hard. I had 5 minutes till the training started so I got on one last hard problem, moved through it easy enough and got to the last move where I lost my balance, fell and went over on my ankle.



Pain rushed through my leg and I couldn't move. All I could think was "this is it; I'm done; no more comps this year; I can't train; I'll be too weak when I get back" and just as I was feeling my strongest. I was distraught and the look on Tom's face when he saw the size of my ankle did not help. Carol Hayes (team mate Tara's mum and a physio to trade) had a look and got me to move a bit. After they'd hopped me to the nearest sofa and strapped an ice pack to my cankle, Carol told me it wasn't broken but could be chipped so I should probably go to A&E. The ambulance was called and I was bombarded by injury forms. When the ambulance arrived they asked if I actually wanted to go to hospital - I didn't call them for a chat - then attempted to make me put weight on my jumbo-sized foot and sighed as I slumped back onto the sofa with shooting pains in my ankle. They strapped me to a chair - as if I would/could try to run away - and shipped me off. Carol accompanied me and I am so grateful to her for that

After waiting for only an hour and a half my ankle was x-rayed, strapped up and I was sent off with crutches to go and see what I was missing at the training session. It was hard walking back through the Depot doors knowing all I could do was watch. I was asked to return to the hospital the next day, but I had a train back to Scotland that night and frankly, I missed Irn Bru. Instead I went to my local hospital where they re-strapped my ankle and arranged for physio. At this point I wasn't told how long the recovery period would be so wasn't sure how this was going to affect my training, my strength or my competition season.

I have already missed the final round of the British Junior Bouldering Championships (and lost out on a podium place as a result), but at my second physio session last week I was given an estimate of 6 weeks recovery. It wasn't really what I was hoping for, but I have to make do.

Taking inspiration from other injured climbers I went to my local wall a couple days after my accident happened because I wanted to keep up my strength. I realised that I couldn't do boulders but I could do routes on the hanger wall at EICA:Ratho without any fear of swinging into the wall if I came off. I haven't climbed routes since January, but I knew that if I didn't do something I would lose strength and stamina. I got on and one-footed-it up a 6B+ lead route. Near the top my functioning leg got boxed. My stamina was better than I thought but my leg was completely knackered. Thanks to the massive roof I was able to

hang from my arms and try to shake out my leg at one point. It was tough. By the end of the night I had also managed to top a 6c which I was quite proud of as it involved me doing a one arm lock off on a move that required a left heel hook which obviously I couldn't do. I finished off with a fingerboard session, some core and then a hobble out the disabled exit.



I am extremely motivated and know that this injury isn't going to stop me. It may affect my confidence when I can boulder again; it may mean that even though I can now walk on it, I'm not even close to landing on it; and it may mean that I miss a few comps, but it certainly doesn't mean I'm going to come back any weaker. I'll be stronger.

I've had another 3 sessions since the accident, managed a 7a+ lead (which means I only have 1 route left to tackle – the others all need two good legs). I've done more campus board sessions, fingerboard sessions, and core sessions. I've already improved on all my recovery exercises and my physio is happy with my progress. I've gone from not being able to put any weight on my foot to using a balance board with only my bad foot. My aim now is to improve my pinch, shoulder and campus strength. Hopefully in 3 weeks' time I'll be back on the boulder wall in time for the final European Youth Cup and I'll be able to do better than before. Wish me luck...

## Confidence – it comes from some surprising sources

Confidence is one of my biggest issues. A year ago I had no confidence in my ability, I could excel in training and then go to a comp and get so psyched-out that I would do terribly and it would keep happening every comp. I never believed I was good enough. I still struggle with this at European comps, but I have something that surprisingly helps with this.

Ivan Bialy is a 14 year old boy from Edinburgh who has been climbing for only 3 years. Ivan started climbing with his school at EICA:Ratho and comes from a non-climbing family (just like me) so we hit it off from the start. When I first started mentoring him he was a v3 climber who could barely climb 6c top-rope. He has now managed 'Cubby's Roof' outdoors and a V9 problem during the last EICA:Ratho bouldering comp, much to the admiration of the 'wads' there.

Ivan suffers from the same issue I had last year. He can climb harder than me occasionally and only fails when his height gets in the way (he's short for 14 years old) so the fact that he can manage most of the moves I can is incredible. He has hesitated to compete nationally due to the fact he thinks he's weak. He is in one of the hardest categories for competing (Youth B boys) where there are at least 7 boys at a strong enough level to compete internationally. I believe that he has got the ability to do incredibly well, but I can see he's where I was. It's me telling him that he is capable that makes me realise that I'm the same. I need to learn to take my own advice. I've been mentoring Ivan for only a short time, but I've seen him progress so fast. I think he's very much like me. Physically strong, but lacking in confidence.



Every time I tell him that he's capable, that he's strong, that he can do well if he just believes, I realise it's what I get told, but the difference is he knows it's true and I still struggle. I think it's about time he started mentoring me.

Working with him, as well as the others I mentor less often, really helps me to become better and progress with my ability as I can see climbing from a different view. I can see different ways of climbing; I can see someone with the same problems I have and I can see a way to solve those problems for both of us. I can feel confidence when I see how much they look up to me. I think that with or without my help Ivan has the ability to become one of the best climbers in Britain if he starts to have some confidence and that gives me confidence that I can get better abroad and not worry in the future. It's seeing people like Ivan improve so much in just 3 years, and slowly build up confidence that gives me the motivation and confidence to be the best I can. That's all anyone needs.



## An amazing end, a new beginning

Out of the 6 and a half years I've been climbing, 5 of which I've been on the GB Youth team and 4 of which I've been competing internationally, I have never taken part in a competition that was as good as Laval. It was the best by far. The blocks were good, my performance improved despite my injury, and I got to witness my own team captain come first in his final ever junior comp. Emotions were on high in every aspect.

Going into the comp my mind was filled with doubt. I couldn't help but worry about how well I would perform with my recovering ankle, or if I'd even manage to compete fully. I'd been climbing again for 4 weeks but I'd only been training properly for 2. To top it my entire ankle was still sore and I couldn't get full movement from it at all. All of these aspects had the power to get in my head and strike fear through my heart. The days we spent in France prior to the comp settled me slightly as I was used to it and I felt like I could get back into comp routine enough to focus. I was wrong. Morning of the comp I sat in the car at 7:15 panicking. I hadn't slept much the night before because I lay awake worrying. It was ironic that the lack of sleep would have made it worse. We arrived at the wall and I felt unbelievably stressed, so much so I couldn't think straight. We read through the problems and everyone went to get warmed up.

As I was about to put on my shoes when Tom grabbed me and told me not to jump straight in. He asked me to play catch, which at first I didn't understand, but he later explained that using my weak hand to catch the tennis ball woke up the left side of my brain too. I don't know what the left side does, but in that moment I woke up and everything suddenly became very real. I would be competing in 45 minutes. I was far from prepared, physically and mentally. I sat down to put my shoes on for real and Tom came over to speak to me. I can't remember what he said, but it was along the lines of believing in me, and the fact that he knew, even if I didn't, that I was good enough to do well. That should have given me confidence and strength but the doubt in my mind blocked it out; all I could feel was worry and dread; I didn't want to disappoint anyone, especially not someone with that much belief in me after everything that had happened in the past couple months. I kept getting more and more stressed, so much so that almost immediately after Tom said that I felt like bursting into tears. I didn't know what to do so I climbed. I felt strong but not enough; I needed to clear my head before I could compete. After I warmed up and loosened off I sat and tried to listen to music, something that, for me, had never worked before. This time was different, I found a song that not only calmed me down, but psyched me up.

It was time to go; we all grabbed our stuff and headed to the wall. I selected a problem that was hard but I thought I could do. I couldn't, I dropped the first move, but then so did everyone else. I got on again and made a second attempt. It didn't get much easier, I managed to get the bonus but then found myself stuck. Moving on seemed like the best option at this point since the angle I'd fallen at had ever so slightly jarred my bad ankle. Tom came to me with a massive smile on his face and told me that Jen had flashed the first problem she got on. Obviously my competitive nature kicked in and I knew I could tell whether I was strong enough based on whether I could flash it too. I went over and took a look – it was awkward and technical, like something that could spit the strongest climber off with a slight misjudgement of balance, hold angle, or even distance. A girl from Denmark came to ask if I'd tried it and what I thought. My only reply was 'oh no' with a slight shake in my voice. She obviously didn't know me or how much pressure I thought was on me at this point. The rest of the team were preoccupied by Tara getting on one of the harder problems. It was the perfect time to try it, none of them would see if I fell and I wouldn't feel as embarrassed.

With only the judge and the Danish girl's eyes on me I got on the problem. I made it half way with great discomfort, I was close to falling at least twice and it was at the hardest move on the problem that I looked up to see Michelle and Tom's faces looking right at me. They thought I could do it, I could see in their eyes that they weren't worried for me at all. I couldn't fall now, I could do it, just needed to take my time, breathe and very slowly reach my foot across. The few feet between me and the hold seemed to take days to cross. The second my foot touched the hold relief rushed through every limb in my body. I reached the top hold and pumped my fist with success. I knew it wasn't a hard problem but I had flashed it after all the doubting and disbelief. I could do it now, I didn't need to worry. I was back.

I flashed the easiest problem and tried the hardest, didn't get close, but neither did anyone else so I couldn't be disappointed yet. I got on problem number 6. A block I knew nothing about, I didn't know how any of my teammates had done, and I didn't know how the other teams had done. I had only seen Irish team's Eleanor Hopkins fall off. Eleanor is someone I have climbed with and competed against my whole climbing life. We share many of the same strengths. Usually this would throw me off, would make me think that since she fell I would too, and even when I should find a move easy I would drop it because she did. My head changed its mind this time; it chose to ignore how anyone else was doing and think about how it looked instead.

When I pulled on I was shocked, the holds were distinctly less positive than I had anticipated. I had to use twice the strength to just stay on the wall. Every move was hard and I was extremely close to dropping every one of them. I looked at the second last hold and the voice in my head came back to say, 'this is where you'll fall, you were lucky to make it this far but let's be honest you're done.' But it was wrong, I reached the hold and refused to let go, I felt strong and knew I was good when I controlled the

swing and slammed my foot on the hold. I looked up knowing I only had one move, a grin reaching from ear to ear. With a look that said 'I got this'. Topped; problem done; happy now. I went straight to Tom who said 'was that second go?' Come on now Tom, don't be silly, of course I flashed it. I told you I'm back.

I only topped 3, but I reached the last hold of problem 2 twice until I had to stop because of the pressure it was putting on my ankle. My comp ended when I tried the hardest problem which involved putting almost my entire weight on my bad heel. No surprise it hurt and forced me to stop. It was the last problem I could try so it didn't effect much and I wasn't too bothered other than the fact I had to limp for a while waiting for my ankle to loosen off again. I was very happy with my result but that wasn't the best part of the weekend. That was watching Nathan.

I had followed Nathan throughout the comp, trying to provide the support he had for the rest of us all year, a way of giving back what was given. I'd seen him in the qualifiers and ruined my voice cheering him on in the finals. Normally we can tell where he's finished after he finishes his 3<sup>rd</sup> block. He'd climbed incredibly topping all three Finals problems and had already made every member of the team proud. He was sitting in second nut there were 4 more climbers. We watched all the others finish, none of them knocking him down to third, pretty good result, only one more to go. This Italian guy had won every comp of the year easily so we watched expecting he would easily top it and win as per usual. We had never been so wrong. He came off the problem twice and 4 seconds before the end of his time he got in for his 3<sup>rd</sup> and final attempt. Everyone expected one of those last minute tops we so often see in comps. When his feet hit the mat, when he fell off, when he didn't top, I stopped breathing. Every single member of the team jumped and screamed 'Yes!' as we all realised Nathan had come first. Okay, we felt bad cheering another climber falling off, but as I turned to Gracie, overjoyed for Nathan, and saw a tear come to her eye I was suddenly overwhelmed with emotion and burst into tears of joy. I had never been so proud and happy for anyone before. In my eyes that was our team's biggest achievement of the year. I can only hope that on my last comp, in my last year, in my last chance, I can bring it out and impress my team enough to make them proud like Nathan did. He has inspired me for next year and I am more than ready to come back as a junior and dominate my category. It's my turn

