

World Ice Climbing Competitions



Steven Addison competing at the 2008 Mixed Masters Comp Photo: Jimmy Addison

Everyone who climbs will be aware of the indoor climbing competitions that exist either at their local climbing wall, British competitions (the BLCC and BBC) and International competitions (World Cups and Championships) but did you know about the winter equivalent?

Whilst the indoor competitions are ran and organized by the IFSC, the World Ice Climbing Comps are run by the UIAA. **Steven Addison**, from Inverness, started with the Scottish Mixed Masters and decided to have a go at the Internationals and became the youngest ever competitor. Here he describes his experience...

The Ice Masters World Cup 2008

After training hard and competing in the Scottish Mixed Masters Dry Tooling Competition at Extreme Dream, Aviemore and finishing in 1st position in my category, I was asked by Scott Muir if I would consider competing in the Ice Masters World Cup which was held in three rounds, Italy, Busteni and Switzerland at the beginning of 2008.

The decision was of course with my parents and the chance of my dad getting a trip to the Alps swung the decision for me, I was going to Italy and Switzerland, so it was two months of training with ice axes at every chance I had.

We flew out to Milan on the 16th Jan and picked up a hire car and my dad drove 97 miles to Val Daone, a small village at 950m up the Italian Dolomites.

The climbing competition started on the Friday, I was 9th out to climb in a competition that was set for adults and I was the first and only climber under 18 to ever compete. I finished in 59th position (which is 59th in the world!).

I never made it through to the semi-finals but Ricardo Milani the man who organises the competition ask me if I would light the torch at the opening ceremony as I was the youngest climber ever to compete. So I did this on the Friday night in front of lots of people including the deputy president of Italy, the chief of police, the chief of the fire service, the local mayor as well as lots of other important people and all the people from the local villages. Then there was a huge fire works display and a meal for everyone in a large nearby tent.

I was also asked by Ricardo if I would like to be interviewed by RAI TV (an Italian TV channel), and get filmed climbing and



teaching an Italian boy called Gabriele how to ice climb, which I did and became friends with him.

I also did a radio interview for Italian radio and got invited back in the summer to climb with Riccardo in the Dolomites which I thought was really cool.

One month later on the 21st February we were off again this time with Scott Muir and Andy Turner with me, we were off to Sass Fee in Switzerland, arriving just in time to get to registration and find out what number I was climbing: it was No49 which I was happy with (at least I was not out too early).

Photo above: Steven in the men's qualifiers 2008 Photo: Jimmy Addison:

All the action is in the centre of a round ten-floor car park; the climbing structure about 30metres high! We were there for 12 o'clock and into isolation at 1pm where I was until my number was called at 2:30pm. I was nervous as I came out with a camera crew filming me for BBC2 Scotland's Adventure Show and streamed live over the internet.

I tied in, had another look at where I was to go, then I was off climbing up really sketchy granite holds on a round pillar at the start of the route then onto a huge swinging ice block where I seemed to be hanging for ever, not being big enough to reach over another ice block to the next hold the game was up for me, but I was really happy finishing 75th equal in the men's difficulty.

I persuaded my dad to let me enter the speed



competition, which was up a 20m ice wall; the winner doing it in 14.28 seconds - I took a little longer!! But because I made it to the top without falling off I ended up finishing in 28th position in the world which I am really pleased with.

Ice Climbing World Cup 2009 Photos: Lukasz Warzecha

At the end of last summer I started to train with my ice axes for the 5 rounds of the Mixed Masters Dry Tooling Competition which was to be held at 5 different climbing walls across Scotland starting in October at Avertical wall in Dundee and ending at Kinlochleven. I managed to win my category in 4 out of the 5 rounds and went on to win the final.

This got me wanting to go to The Ice Climbing World Cup again this year in Val Daone and Saas Fee.

At first I didn't think I was going to manage as it was going to cost too much but when I heard from Kevin Howett at The MCofS that I



had qualified for a bursary I was delighted and carried on training till the second week in January when myself and my dad headed off to Val Daone in Italy.

This year the opening ceremony was to be held on the Friday with the qualifiers on the Saturday and finals on the Sunday.

We arrived a little late as we got lost in bad fog whilst going through Breshia so we missed the opening ceremony but we were in time for our meal in the big tent along with all the other competitors (and all the locals). Then it was off to bed as we had an 8am briefing in the tent the following morning.

I was climbing in vest No: 37 and in Group B so I was to be the first of the four climbers from the UK out to climb.

This year at least, I was able to reach the first hold without any artificial assistance though it was still a long way up!

The format had changed this year so instead of having two routes with six minutes time limit to each route, it was one attempt to get as



high as possible.

I had set myself a target which was to better my last years performance which I did, managing to get more than half way up the first panel. I finished in 27th position out of 31 climbers in my group, I was really pleased.



Top: Tim Emmet gives advice. Above: Rob Gibson in the qualifiers Photos: Lukasz Warzecha

Rob Gibson from the UK did really well in the Qualifiers and managed to get through to the semi-finals, only just missing out getting into the finals.

It was great to meet and talk to other climbers who I met last year. I was also approached by Villa Natale from Climbing Technology, who was impressed by my climbing and awarded me with 1st place for the youngest athlete in the competition, he also asked if they could support my climbing activities for the forthcoming season along with an invite to come back and visit their factory where all their climbing hard wear is made!!

The following weekend and we were in Saas Fee in Switzerland for the 2nd round of the competition, this time there was five climbers from the UK, Tim Emmett, Andy Turner, Rob Gibson, Malcolm Kent and Myself.

I was worried that I would get a high number and end up in isolation all day, missing out the chance to watch how the others got on. I was

lucky and picked out vest No: 2 which meant, as there was two routes, I was first out in group B, so I was only in isolation for about one hour after our fifteen minutes route preview where Tim was there to give me some great advice.

As the moves were really far apart, I only managed to get onto the first ice block, where I smashed my axe into the ice, I pulled onto it and the ice broke, spitting me off!

It was really great to watch Rob Gibson again doing really well in the qualifiers.

The final was on the Saturday night and every space on every floor of the eleven floor car park was full of spectators, there were over 2000 people there. It is a brilliant place to watch the climbing from as everyone is so close to all the action.

Watching Marcus Bandler from Austria getting to the top of the final route which was level with the 9th floor of the car park was just awesome.

I can't wait for next year!

