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Dmm have allowed us to interview their team climber, Alex Megos. Alex began climbing at the age of five. By the time he was 13 he was climbing 8a and winning youth competitions. The 18 year old Alex is now a climbing sensation with redpoints of 8c+, a flash of a 8c and onsights of numerous 8b+'s. This article gives us an insight into the techniques he uses to allow him to onsight at the highest level.



Alex on Infinity, 8c+, Eldorado, Frankenjura

Can you give us an overview of your best onsights?

Terrace Hill 8b+, Margalef Barabuk 8b+, Kalymnos (Telendos) La Pietra murata 8b+, Arco (Massone)

How do the demands of an onsight differ from a Redpoint ?

Between onsight and redpoint there is a big difference in many aspects.

In redpoints you have checked out the route many times before and you have worked on every detail, if the route is at your limit. You can practice every move until they are perfected, which means that you can take as much time as you need to send the route.

An onsight is completely different, you just have one single try in which to activate all of your physical and mental power. In other words, you

have to give 110% in one shot. But which abilities are necessary for an onsight and not necessarily for a redpoint? At first you have to have a great repertoire of movements for every climbing situation, which is always a good base. In an onsight there are very often unexpected situations which are not obvious from the ground, so you have to think really fast to find a solution. You don't have to find the best, but the best possible solution. I think this is the main point. Of course there are lots of other abilities you need, for example **endurance**, willingness to take risks and sometimes also a bit of luck.

Do you have to do any specific training for an onsight compared with a redpoint? Can you describe a session?

When I'm training in the gym I don't have any specific exercises which you can train like for example **endurance**, but still the onsight is part of every training. When you have new routes or new boulder problems in a new gym or in your all-day-training gym, I always try an onsight first and do not work on the route or the boulder as first thing. The same thing when I'm rock climbing and I have a new route. When you want to do specific training for onsights you have to travel around to see new gyms, new rocks, different terrain, other types of rock and different climbing styles. This is definitely the best way to improve your onsight level, but this is time consuming and not possible on regular bases (unless your sister is a millionaire 😊).

When you are on the ground how do you prepare and plan for the onsight?

I first have a look at the complete route to see where the bolts and where the top is. Next step is to go through the route and its single holds to see in which order you have to take the holds and with which hand. When you approximately know how to climb the route you have to check out the best positions to clip and some rests as far as obvious from the ground.

You obviously can't see all the moves from the ground. How do you work out the sequences for these sections to reduce the chance of falling off?

When you don't see all the sequences you can have a look at the last moves and holds which you can see clearly. There you can look for some bigger holds where you could rest to think about how to do the sequence which you couldn't see before.

How do you work out the best positions to clip the bolts and rest during the climb?

When you have a look at most of the routes outside you can see the chalk on the rock. Much chalk often means good holds, and from this hold you can often clip or rest. When you are already climbing I would clip from the first good position and not loose time by searching the best clipping position.

Do you have to train your ability to work out a sequence of moves rapidly?

Yes, and I train it by trying to climb as fast as possible but still precise and going onsights as often as possible. When you do onsights and climb in many different areas it will improve.



Alex on Head Crash, 8c, Wasserstein, Frankenjura

For your hardest onsight attempts do you pick routes that may have movement types that suite your style of climbing?

Yes of course, you will climb harder when it is your style of climbing. I think it is generally easier to onsight longer routes, because there you don't have that many hard moves but you need more endurance. When you have hard moves you often have to perform them very precisely to pass through, so when the route is unknown you don't know how to do the moves, which makes it more difficult to onsight shorter routes with harder moves. On longer routes more endurance is needed and the moves are (often) not that hard, which means that you don't have to do the moves that precise and you can fight more to send the route.

What would be the best piece of advice you can give someone to help improve their onsight climbing?

I think the best way to improve your onsight level is to do as many onsights

as possible. What also can help is bouldering, because of its variety of different movements, partly very strange, but it increases your repertoire which means that you will find more solutions directly in the climbing situation.

What elements do you need to train more to improve the grade you can onsight?

Personally I think I have to climb more in different areas and different types of rock to improve my onsight level. My all-day-climbing area is the Frankenjura, where onsighting is not that easy, so it is nearly impossible for me to onsight Frankenjura's harder routes compared with those in Spain.

Our thanks go to DMM and Alex for allowing us to interview him. We wish Alex all the best for his future onsighting.

It's good to share!



Written by **Paul Fearn**
Paul first started climbing way back in 1989. Since then he's managed to climb E6 trad and 8a+ sport routes. Paul will be sharing his expertise to help you to become a better climber. Check out Paul's blog on [training for rock climbing](#).
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