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CLIMBING TRAINING | PAUL FEARN | MARCH 20, 2012 10:07 AM | EDIT

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Beta Climbing Designs, the UK importer for Sterling Ropes, have arranged for us to interview Mina Leslie-Wujastyk. Mina is best known for her bouldering achievements, having successfully climbed multiple Font 8a's, and as a key member of the British Bouldering Team. The winter of 2011/12 is the first time she has adopted a carefully structured training regime. In this interview she describes the various training and diet techniques she is using to help increase her performance during 2012.



Mina Competing at the 2012 CWIF. Picture Copyright Alex Messenger

What do you consider to be your greatest bouldering achievements?

I guess my best achievements to date are some of the harder blocs I have climbed in Fontainebleau and Ticino. I say this because I put so much into doing them. I would love to say I rocked up and just climbed them but in reality I sat under these for some time, fighting physically and mentally!

What are your climbing objectives for 2012?

My objectives for 2012 are varied. I have been training very hard this year and am looking forward to competing in the Bouldering World Cups (Slovenia, Vienna, Innsbruck, Vail and Munich). I hope to do better than I have previously. After the Vail round, and thanks to support from Arc'teryx, I am going to spend two months in Colorado bouldering, hoping to have fun and to push my limit. When we return from this trip I aim to shift my focus to route climbing in the UK for a couple of months which will then lead nicely into my conditioning phase for next year.

One of your targets for 2012 is the Bouldering World Cup. Is your training focused purely on bouldering?

Pretty much so... My training up until recently has been purely bouldering but I like to think that the power endurance work that I am doing will also be beneficial for route climbing later in the year and that the general improvement in fitness will help all round.

During the winter of 2011 you have focused on building a much more structured training plan. Can you describe the different training phases and lengths of these phases?

This is the first year I have ever trained in a such a structured way and I have to say I really like it. I have trained according to a plan David Mason developed for me which was made up of an 8 week conditioning phase, improving general body fitness so as to make the most of the following phases; a 6 week strength phase, working on maximum strength exercises; a 6 week power phase, transferring the strength gained into power and improving dynamic movement; and an 8 week power endurance phase, working towards being able to use the power gained in longer problems.



Mina Bouldering. Picture Copyright Nick Brown

Could you describe the training sessions you use during each of these different phases?

Conditioning

This phase in particular was a bit of an experiment and didn't quite go to plan. I did too much and ended up over training. The general idea behind this phase was to do a high volume at a low intensity, with limited rest periods. So, I did climbing sessions where I would complete 50 problems, at a low difficulty level but with no rest times – I would try my best to jump straight onto the next problem when one was completed. This sounds okay, but is surprisingly hard work and I had to drop the difficulty level lower than I expected!

I would then have roughly 10-20 minutes rest and then begin a weights and conditioning circuit. This weights involved high repetitions of low weight – 30 repetitions of each exercise, moving from one exercise to the next with no rest. I would then move into a conditioning circuit; again high volume, low intensity. This circuit had a 30s on/30s off template.

This was probably the hardest phase for me, partly because I overdid it, partly because the nature of this training is that it makes you tired and you are not working strength/power at a high intensity at all. When I tried to have a normal session I didn't climb well and I found this mentally hard.

Strength

This phase was simpler. I did climbing sessions on the 45 degree board at the Climbing Works – trying to lock moves and climb slowly where possible. I also did weights – this time low repetitions and high weight, aiming to work near to maximum capacity. This phase also saw me doing finger boarding sessions – working on my pocket strength by doing repeaters and also weighted pull up pyramids.

Power

This phase was a bit disrupted by injury but I will outline the intended plan. I continued to do weights, but lowered the weight used and tried to complete faster, more explosive repetitions. I began training on the campus board too, working on maximum ladders, wide ladders, doubles and offset pull ups. I increased the intensity a bit each week. Using a fingerboard, I replaced the weighted pull ups with assisted one arm pull ups, lowering the assistance each week. This phase also involved more climbing, focusing on short powerful moves at my maximum.

Power Endurance

This is the phase I am currently in. The idea here was to split the phase and do 3 weeks of basic power endurance, a rest week, and then 4 weeks of competition specific power endurance. The basic power endurance sessions are 4x4s of 12-17 move problems where the rest period gets less after each repetition. Exhausting!

The competition specific training I have yet to do but the plan is to simulate a competition format of 5mins on/5 mins off.

I notice that as part of your training within the British Bouldering Team you do power endurance circuits. Can you describe how these help your bouldering?

The power endurance circuits improve my ability to do hard moves when tired or at the end of a problem. I hope that the training will help me in competitions; to have the power to try my best on the last problem as well as the first. Outdoors, I hope the power endurance will help me to complete problems, have longer climbing days and allow for more attempts on climbs.

You have had nutritional advice from the British team nutritionist. What advice where you given and how has it benefited your climbing?

Rebecca Dent our team nutritionist has been hugely helpful and supportive. Rebecca has helped me to eat a more balanced diet; ensuring that I get all I need in order to train hard, but helping me to avoid unnecessary evils.

Through her support I have altered my body composition and weight in a controlled way so that I feel the best I ever have physically. The process has never made me too hungry and I have even learned to love green tea!

I have also been supported nutritionally by Optimum Nutrition UK who kindly supply me with supplements to support my training. I use their Whey protein and 2.1.1 products after training sessions. I also use Glutamine tablets and fish oil daily. I use their Wholly Oats range of protein bars to plug gaps between meals or on heavy training days. Other than that I just eat very healthily; lots of fish, vegetables and carbs like sweet potatoes and bulgurwheat.



Mina Bouldering. Picture Copyright Nick Brown

What have you learnt from working with the British Team Sports Physiologist and how have you applied it to your bouldering?

Dominic White, our team Sport's Physiologist has also been hugely supportive and has used his experience in other sports to help us tailor our training to give the best results. Dom organises fitness testing for us at the start of the training season (in early October) and then again just before the competition season begins (late March). This gives us good indicators for what we need to work on in training and also gives us feedback on how our training has worked for us.

Are you building your training around specifically peaking for the Bouldering World Cup?

That is the plan! As I haven't really done this before it is hard to gauge how my body will respond but I am hoping that I will peak for the competitions and still have gas in the tank for a summer bouldering in Colorado.

Do you do work to develop the varied techniques required for bouldering?

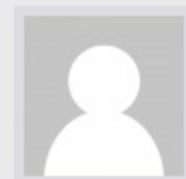
I haven't really done much technique work this year. My biggest weaknesses lie in power and strength so this is where my focus has been. However, I did fail on a slab at the CWIF this weekend so perhaps this decision needs a review.....

For more information on Mina visit her website. Our thanks go to Mina and her sponsor Sterling Ropes, we wish her all the best for the 2012 World Cup Bouldering Competitions.

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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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