

Useful Information

Here's the word from your heroes. Read and become wise...

Interviews

March 2, 2012

Search

Pete Robins on Hard Redpoint Climbing



DMM have kindly arranged for us to interview their team climber, Pete Robins. Originally renown for his hard gritstone ascents, such as a flash of the End of the Affair (E8 6b, Curbar Edge) he has since moved to Wales and repeated some of the hardest slate and limestone test pieces available. This has cumulated in a repeat of the 'big' three sport climbing test pieces on Lower Pen Trwyn. These repeats have made Pete an expert at succeeding on hard redpoints and he shares his experience with us in the interview below.

Posted by **Paul Fearn**

Tweet 11

Like 17

8 1

For more tips on Redpointing check out this excellent top ten list on [8a.nu](#).



Pete Robins on Liquid Amber Scv, Lower Pen Trwyn. Picture copyright: Adam Wainright

You have completed the trilogy of 8c+'s at Pen Trwyn. What sort of training did you do to give you the level of finger/body strength and power endurance these routes demand?

What do I have to do to climb harder? That's what everybody wants to know, right? Well I don't know! But while most people seem to intuitively focus on training strategies, I

wonder how vital this is. Training is certainly important, but its only one part. How you mentally prepare for each go is equally important I think. How come we often get up a hard problem, on our 'last go psyche', or when we feel the first drops of rain? How come we didn't do it 10 goes ago when we were fresh? I'll try to explain this more, through your training questions.

I wanted to climb these routes because they are absolutely fantastic - the best in Wales. Liquid Ambar and Sea of Tranquillity are steeped in history; great benchmark routes which everybody knows about, and futuristic goals for me at the time. Megalopa is the best route on the crag, and a first ascent battle with Neil Dyer was exhilarating and all encompassing (Neil did it first in the end but the whole 3-month journey was absolutely amazing for both of us). So there you have it, desire is the ultimate key. If you want to do routes as much as I wanted to do these three, you don't have to think about or plan a training regime, you just end up doing what it takes to get to the top. LPT is tidal, and affected by sea ming, so you can't mess about. If you're dealing with a 15-session siege, you have to get on with it and be there every time conditions are perfect and muscles are fresh. This means working flexitime, pestering you're mates for a delay, trying really really hard at the crag, and resting and being patient in between sessions. You can be too keen and train too much and end up being tired at the crag.

What type of climbing training do you think is most beneficial for you, to enable you to succeed on your hard redpoints?

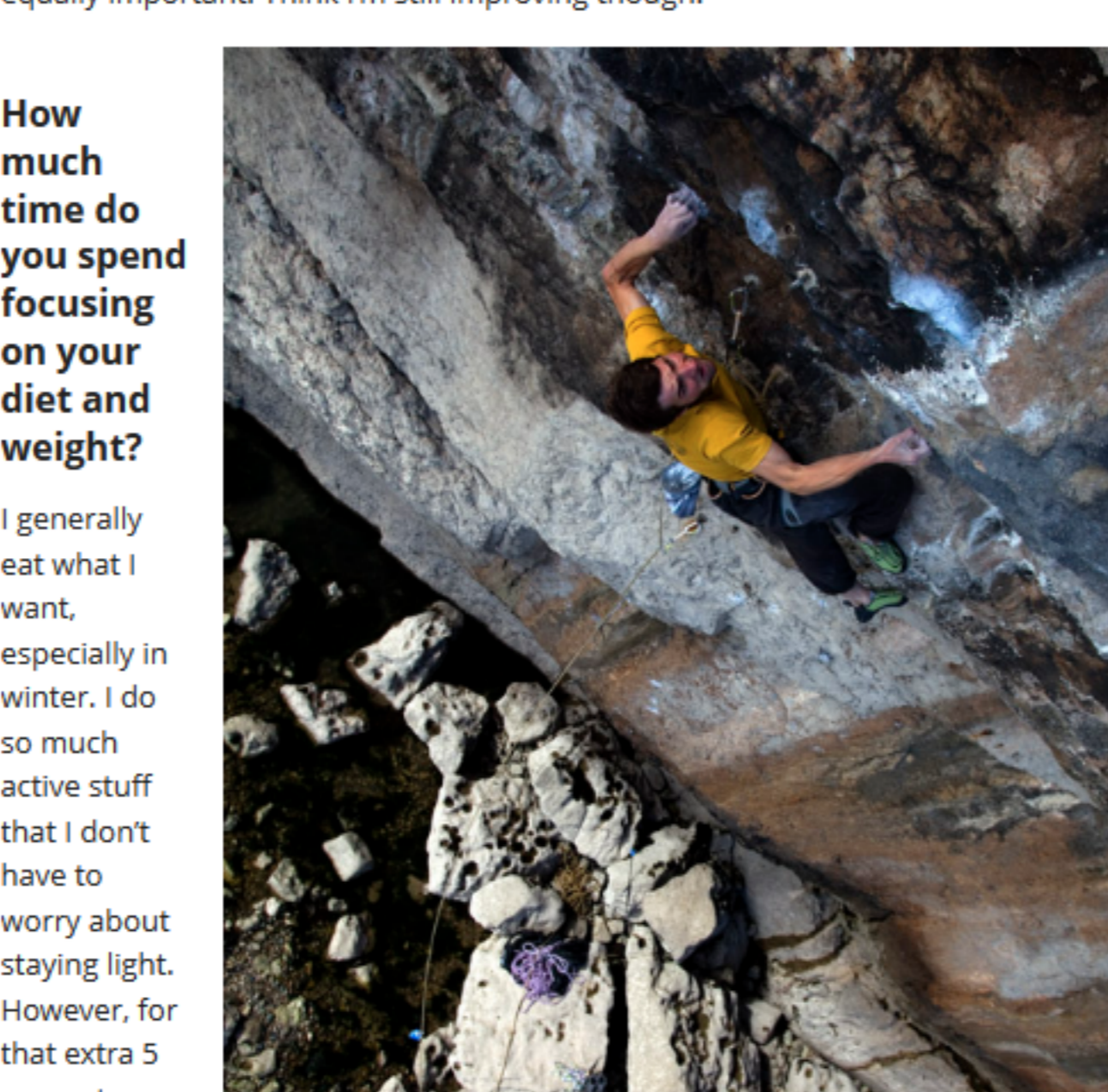
Usually, I'll work out a sequence quite quickly; then its just a matter of time on the route/problem to climb sections efficiently. If its quite long, I'll make sure I work on all sections. For example, if there's a easy prelude to the crux, there is a difference between climbing it easily and floating through as though it wasn't there. If I have to resort to training to work out a move, I'll generally just focus more on the related muscle groups (e.g. biceps and stomach for undercut moves).

Do you follow a carefully structured training program or do you just get out and climb as much as possible?

You've probably guessed by now that the key for me is being at the crag. If the weather forces me to go indoors, I usually end up fooling around until I get tired enough to go home. I hate it!

What training do you think you need to do to move your redpoint climbing to the next grade?

Free time. That's all I would need. An extra day off per week and I'd climb a grade harder for sure. But I've got bills to pay, and other aspects of my life that are equally important. Think I'm still improving though!



Pete Robins on Sea of Tranquillity 8c+, Lower Pen Trwyn. Copyright Jack Giddard

performance, I'll eat a little less. This usually happens when I'm close to a big red point. I'll lose a few pounds in a week or two, then return to normal habits afterwards. I wouldn't recommend prolonged dieting if you like food as much as I do, it'll drive you insane!

Do you feel that the improvements in your bouldering level have helped your ability to climb hard redpoints?

Absolutely. Nobody can climb seriously if they don't boulder. When bouldering, you're climbing hard moves all the time, always being inventive and learning new stuff, and exploring the limits of your body and mind. This makes time on the rope so much more efficient. I pretty much know whether I can do a move and roughly how long it will take, from the first time I try it, which is probably due to all the bouldering I do.

If you had to give somebody advice on how to climb 8c, what would your top tip be?

Tough question. You've got to enjoy the journey, essentially. Its not really about the tick, if its going to take a chunk of sessions, its got to be about hanging out at the crag with a bunch of like-minded hero-crimpmasters. Well, that's what drives me anyway.

How do you deal with the psychological stress of leading serious grit routes and red points at the limit of your ability? Do you use different techniques for dealing with them both?

The big joke is that most trad routes, even E9's and E10's, are easy, compared with hard sport routes. Even the bold ones, once you've thought about the logistics a bit, most of them end up being safe as well. So, except for a few McLeod horrors, head-pointing is just easy red-pointing. On-sighting hard/scary trad routes, however, is desperate, and I'm not claiming to be much good at it, compared with people like James McHaffie. However, even that's not too difficult, once you set off, because you'll either do it quite easily, or back off. The hard bit is choosing to set off in the first place. Red-pointing is completely different, but stressful nevertheless. I am stubborn and patient, and experienced on red-pointing, so I know it will always happen in the end. I only get really nervous with first ascents for some reason.



Pete Robins climbing Megalopa 8c+, Lower Pen Trwyn. Copyright Adam Wainright

What tactics do you use when working the route, to get to the point at which you can go for the redpoint?

One tactic is to just go for it as soon as possible. You only really try hard on red-point, and it gives you a good feeling for how moves will turn out

in-succession. Sometimes, I end up doing strange inventive moves in extremis, which I wouldn't have thought of on the dog because my body position is slightly different, or something. I'll generally combine a few 'proper' goes with bouldering out moves and working easier sections when I get more tired. Think laterally about ropework, clipping positions, rests, chalking zones, etc, as well. This is the really sneaky stuff that can make a difference.

Do you have a specific routine you use before you set off on a redpoint?

No, I just make sure everything feels right. For instance, if I'm low on chalk, or I've got too many layers on, it'll bug me a bit which might make a difference. Its also quite easy to slip into complacency about goes on a long siege, especially at your local crag: if you start thinking that you've always got another go, you might get used to failing. This is a common and nasty problem that is hard to snap out of, because you really want the route, but what you probably need to do is take a break. I'm a sucker for this problem!

What plans do you have for 2012?

I'm loving bouldering at the moment, we're anticipating a new North Wales bouldering guide which has inspired us to get new stuff done. For the summer, well I love red pointing hard routes, which means more time on the Ormes I guess, since work is so hectic and I don't get much time to travel. Although I'm determined to travel about more this year. I'm off to South France for starters next month, then America hopefully in the Autumn.

Our thanks go to Pete and DMM for this excellent insight into hard redpointing. To learn more about Pete visit his DMM profile page. We wish Pete the best of luck for his future climbing.

Tags: redpoint climbing, redpointing

0 Comments Rock Climbing UK

Sort by Best + Share Favorite

Start the discussion...

Be the first to comment.

ALSO ON ROCK CLIMBING UK

Nacho Sanchez on his Climbing Training

3 comments • a year ago

Colm Shannon — It's based on the training plan developed by Eva Lopez ...

Why Contacts Are The Better Option For Climbers

3 comments • a year ago

Rob Carter — Good points, but there are downsides to contacts, depending on ...

Minus 8% Bodyfat in just under 2 months – The ...

11 comments • a year ago

mewes — Actually I eat only low-glycemic-index carbs ... brown rice, whole grain ...

Resole Review

1 comment • a year ago

markus haunschmidt — Boosters are still made. They are easy to get ...

Subscribe Add Disqus to your site DISQUS