



## **Western Cape Climbing Advice for Belaying at Climbing Competitions**

In the case of any climbing competition endorsed by Western Cape Climbing (WCC), the WCC assumes an element of responsibility for the conduct of the event. The WCC therefore has an obligation to at least issue guidance on event organisation and good practice. The notes that follow are addressing the issue of selection and deployment of belayers at climbing competitions.

### ***1. Assumptions***

- At a WCC endorsed event (such as a WCC local or provincial event or an SANCF National Event) the host organisation takes on the major responsibility for the effective and safe running of the event.
- Venue responsibilities include standard health and safety issues, buildings, fire exits, accident reporting, near misses, etcetera. These WCC guidance notes deal with the identification, selection and deployment of appropriate belayers for competition belaying. These notes must be adopted by the host organisation at WCC endorsed events.

### ***2. Staffing Structure***

- Each host organisation must nominate a Belaying Co-ordinator who has overall responsibility for the belaying during the event. In the case of any WCC-hosted National Lead Climbing Competition the Jury President has the right to remove any belayer at any time.
- The Belaying Co-ordinator has responsibility for:
  1. selecting suitable belayers in advance in accordance with the attached guidance (see "Selection of Suitable Belayers" in section 3 below);



2. ensuring that the belayers are familiar with the attached belaying guidance (see section 4 below “Belaying Guidance”) as well as the Belaying Rules of the Competition (see section 5 below “Excerpts from IFSC Rules Relating to Belaying”);
  3. ensuring that the belayers are made fully aware of route-specific issues during the event;
  4. ensuring that the belayers are monitored during the event itself.
- Also the belayer must be equipped with CE approved climbing equipment.

### ***3. Selection of Suitable Belayers***

Belayers at competitions must have appropriate belaying experience. The Belaying Co-ordinator must be satisfied that they have this experience and be satisfied that they can belay competently in a competition context. The co-ordinator must have personally seen them belay in this context.

Issues for the belaying co-ordinator to consider include; the belayer’s familiarity with the Belaying Guidance in section 4 below, the belayer’s competence to complete these responsibilities, competence with the chosen belay device, fluency of rope paying out and taking in, experience of holding unexpected falls; and a good knowledge of harnesses and the correct way that they should be fastened.

### ***4. Belaying Guidance***

At the start of each attempt on a competition route:

- Each competitor shall be equipped in accordance with the IFSC regulations governing equipment.
- The climbing rope shall be tied to each competitor’s climbing harness using an “8” knot which itself is secured with a safety knot.



- Before the competitor begins their attempt on a route the belayer shall check that the harness is properly fastened and adjusted and that the rope is properly secured and ready for immediate use.
- The Belaying Co-ordinator is responsible for deciding whether a belayer should have an assistant at the beginning of the route to provide additional security for a competitor during the lower part of their attempt on a route.
- During speed competitions. The Belaying Co-ordinator is responsible for deciding whether a belayer should have an assistant at the beginning and/or throughout an attempt on a route to provide additional security in taking in for a top-roped competitor.

During an attempt by a competitor the belayer must at all times pay careful attention to the progress of the competitor to ensure:

- That the competitors movements are not hindered in any way by the rope being too tight;
- That when the competitor attempts to connect the rope to a protection point they are not hindered in doing so. And if failing to connect the rope to a protection point, any excessive slack in the rope is immediately taken in;
- That all falls are stopped in a safe and (to some extent) dynamic manner;
- That no excessive falls shall be experienced by the competitor being belayed;
- That route-specific hazards such as overlaps or arêtes that a competitor might swing into, or particularly difficult moves prior to the first protection point, are noted and precautions taken to minimise the risks to the competitor.

After the competitor has connected the rope to the final protection point, or has fallen, the competitor shall be lowered to the ground in a controlled manner i.e. not too fast. Care must be taken to ensure the competitor does not come into contact with any ground-based equipment or spectators.



- Whilst the competitor is untying the rope from their harness the belayer should pull the rope down at a speed that does not disturb the quick-draws.
- It is the responsibility of the Belaying Co-ordinator (in consultation with the Jury President) to ensure that competition belayers are adhering to good belaying practice as outlined in these guidance notes. The Jury President and the Belaying Co-ordinator retain the right and responsibility to intervene and replace a belayer at any time during a competition.
- A belayer's assistant for lead climbing may be recommended at National Lead Competitions. Their role includes sorting out the rope, spotting competitors or at times, if appropriate acting as a back up or relief person at suitable intervals.

## ***5. Excerpts from IFSC Rules Relating to Belaying***

### **Lead Climbing**

#### ***Safety Checks***

6.3.12 Prior to any attempt on a route, the belayer shall check that:

- a) The competitor's harness is properly fastened;
- b) The climbing rope is connected to the competitor's harness in accordance with Article 6.3.8; and
- c) The climbing rope is coiled or arranged in such a manner that it is ready for immediate and proper use.

#### ***Belaying***

6.3.13 The climbing rope shall be controlled from the ground by one (1) belayer, preferably assisted by a second person. The belayer must use a Manual Belay Device and shall at all times during a competitor's attempt on a route, pay careful attention to the progress of the competitor to ensure that:

- a) A competitor's movements are not hindered in any way by the rope being either too tight or too loose;
- b) When the competitor attempts to connect the rope to any protection point, they are not hindered in doing so or, if the clipping of the rope to the protection point fails, any excessive slack in the rope is immediately taken in;
- c) All falls are stopped in a dynamic and safe manner;
- d) No excessive fall shall be experienced by a competitor being belayed; and



- e) A falling competitor shall not be exposed to any danger of injury caused by the edge of an overlapping section or any other feature of the climbing wall in the arrest of any fall.
- 6.3.14 The belayer shall leave an appropriate amount of slack in the climbing rope at all times. Any tension on the climbing rope may be deemed as an artificial aid or hindrance to a competitor and a Technical Incident shall be declared by the IFSC Judge.
- 6.3.15 Belayers appointed by the organisers shall be trained to belay in a manner suitable for Lead competitions. The IFSC Judge is authorised to instruct the organisers to replace any belayer at any time during a competition. If replaced, the belayer shall not be permitted to play any further part in the belaying of any competitor at that competition.
- 6.3.16 After having connected the rope to the final quickdraw or after a fall, the belayer shall lower the competitor to the ground taking care to ensure that the competitor does not come into contact with any ground-based equipment.
- 6.3.17 While the competitor is untying the rope from their harness, the belayer shall pull the rope down in as fast a manner as possible without unduly disturbing the quickdraws. It is the responsibility of the belayer to ensure that the competitor vacates the Climbing Zone as quickly as possible.

Signed by (Name of Belayer): \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_