

## Bouldering: simply climbing

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convenience of bouldering is one of the reasons she's so passionate about it. She enjoys hiking up to areas and then immediately being able to climb as hard as she can, rather than spend an afternoon climbing multi-pitch routes only to reach the short crux after hours of climbing.

"There's so many reasons I like bouldering," she said. "I like the difficulty of it. I like the fact that you're out there pulling as hard as you can every time you go. You can excel at it quickly if you're dedicated." Her dedication will take her on an extensive road trip this fall. She will spend six to eight weeks traveling to different bouldering areas from California to Utah. She and MacDonald are also going to Fountainebleau, France, with some other friends this fall.

Not all boulderers are as dedicated as Gargono or MacDonald, but most rock climbers at some point have gone or will go bouldering. As DJ Nechrony, a Colorado Mountain School guide, said, he wouldn't spend an entire day bouldering. Rather, he said, "I've always seen bouldering as a means to train for climbing."

Bouldering trains your body to do specific movements, which are generally more powerful, dynamic and more difficult than moves found on most traditional or sport routes. (Traditional routes include routes where climbers place their own protection. Sport routes ascend faces that are already equipped with

bolts.)

Generally climbers cannot do most of the movements on difficult boulder problems on their first few tries. Sometimes it might take up to thirty tries before a boulderer will succeed at a problem that might be only five or six moves. This is one of the allures of the sport, however. Gargono explained that "just being able to make a move on a problem is sometimes one of the greatest accomplishments."

By working a movement over and over climbers teach their bodies to do things they normally wouldn't be able to do. This translates well to other forms of climbing. Local climber and CMS guide Heidi Wirtz said bouldering gives her an opportunity to work on aspects of climbing that she cannot work on while climbing routes. "It's challenging because you can try harder problems than you can do on a rope," she said.

Always doing harder problems means that boulderers will also always be falling. CMS guide Kevin Lorda said "every fall is a ground fall," which makes him less inclined to boulder all the time. CMS guide, Celin Serbo agreed.

"It gives a lot of people a false sense of security," he said. "You're less likely to die (than if you climb longer routes), but you're way more likely to get injured." Boulderers attempt to minimize injuries by using numerous pads to soften falls, and also by "spotting" each other. However, like with any form of climbing, though you can minimize the dangers you can't ever completely control where and how you fall.

Bouldering is not for everybody, but it can be a fun and relatively cheap way to introduce yourself to the sport of climbing. And for the people who passionately love bouldering, there is nothing better in the world. MacDonald said that while she likes to do other things, bouldering and climbing take up probably 85 percent of her time. She's been climbing for over ten years with only a few breaks, and she doesn't plan on stopping any time soon.

"It's meditative," she said. "And it's a dance on the rock that is purely yourself."

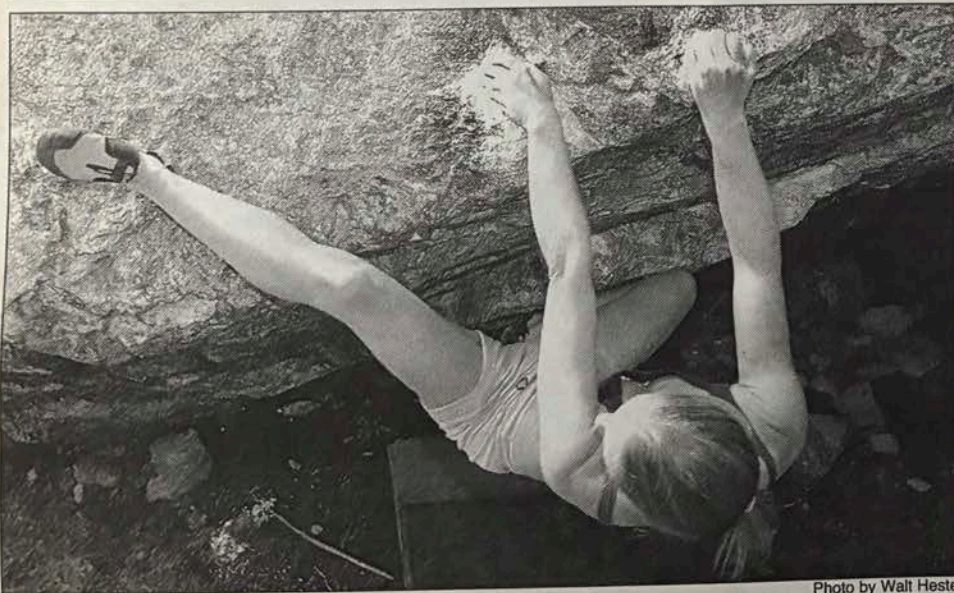
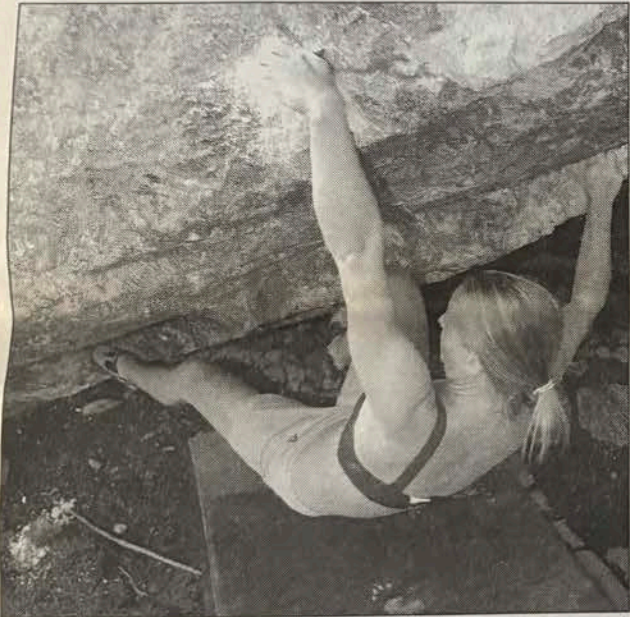
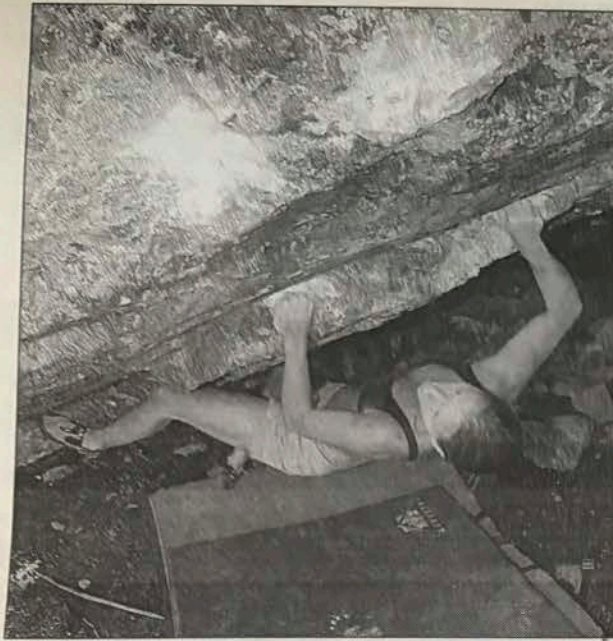


Photo by Walt Hester

Melissa Gargono does a series of moves on a boulder problem near Emerald Lake.