

Youth Climbing Series 2008

South Scotland Report

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Saturday the 26th of April saw the final round of the South of Scotland regional qualifying series of the 'Mountaineering Council of Scotland Youth Climbing Series'. Ratho kids continued where they left off last year – claiming 16 of the possible 18 national final slots.

The standard of climber at this year's competition was the highest it has been in years, which made for extremely exciting viewing. This bodes well for this year's British Final and hopefully our regional team can improve on last year's impressive 3rd placed result.

8-10 year olds

The 8-10 year old Boys category was an extremely close battle between new comer Angus Davidson and last year's champion Stuart Leith. This went right down to the wire with Angus finally snatching victory by the narrowest of margins on the final route of the day. Both these kids are extremely exciting prospects for the future and are tipped to achieve great things at this year's final. A special mention also has to be made to William Bosi. William is without a doubt, one of the most improved young climbers of 2008. William has worked hard in training and this has paid off with a 3rd placed finish in the category, right on the tail of Stuart and Angus.

The Girls category was just as exciting to watch. It is quite amazing to think that the final route for this section weighed in at a hefty 6c+. Not bad considering most of the competitors are knee high to a grass hopper! This category contains one of the most exciting Scottish junior climbing prospects – Rachael Tennant. Rachael was last year's regional champion and only narrowly missed out on a first placed finish in last year's national final. As with last year's series, Rachael put in some impressive performances to take the 1st place. A special mention also has to be made in this category to young Elle Hogarth and Gabriella Stewart. Both were new comers to the competition scene, but performed at an exceptionally high level and managed to clinch 2nd and 3rd place. These two are definitely ones to look out for in the future.

11-13 year olds

The boys category for this age category was a very close ran affair between 3 extremely talented young climbers; Euan King, Jake Scollay and Alexander Bosi. All three of these climbers are well matched in climbing ability and pushed each other close over the 3 rounds. Euan King climbed out of his skin to claim the overall 1st place, with rope work guru Jake Scollay climbing his way into 2nd place, and Alexander Bosi equalled his younger brother's efforts to achieve the 3rd placed finish. Watch out for these guys at the final, as each one of them has the ability to make an impact on the competition.

The girls in this age group put on a fine display yet again. Jaime Davidson scooped first place in her category for the 3rd year in a row. This is a remarkable achievement, but does not begin to show how much she has improved in the last 12 months. Jamie has trained and worked hard and has managed to go from a regular 6c climber to a regular 7a+/7b rock star. Keep an eye out for this one at the final and at other major comps this Year (i.e. BLCC's & BBC's) because there seems to be no stopping her. 2nd and 3rd place was hotly contested by 5 extremely driven and talented young

climbers, and was not decided until the last route of the 3 competition series. Sophie Stanistreet put her remarkable finger strength and technical ability in to action to sneak 2nd place. Eleanor Hopkins managed to achieve 3rd place after a foot slip in the first comp had pushed her quite far down the field. Eleanor is a climber that is bursting with determination and motivation, and she used these traits to their full in a spirited come back.

14-16 year olds

This boys had quite an act to follow in this category after last years performances from Deb Banerji (2007 British Champion) and Jonathan Stocking (2007 British Lead Climbing Champion), both are now un-eligible to compete in the YCS due to British Team commitments and age. And boy did the new wave of Ratho lads step up to the mantle in style! This was the closest this category has ever been, with all 3 of the placed climbers claiming a 1st place finish in one of the rounds. It was so close this year that we had to set 2 routes of 7B+/7C in the last round (usually there is only 1 hard route of 7b in a qualifying round), and 2 of the kids flashed them both! Paul Williamson (the youngest of the trio), who has recently been invited as a squad member on to the British Climbing Team, was holding on to the 1st place right up until the last route, when an uncharacteristic slip pushed him back into 3rd place. This left Jonny Field and Ross Kirkland scrapping it out for the regional title, and boy was it close, with it coming down to one single move on a boulder problem traverse. Watch these guys in the final as all three have the ability and experience to compete with anybody in this age group!

The girls in this category were up for putting up a show as well. 3 extremely talented young climbers cranked their way to the top 3 slots in their category. YCS regular high achiever Jessica Mckaskey was given a fright by new comer Jasmine Ryan, but still managed to hold on to the overall 1st slot. Eilidh Baird wasn't far behind and put in some splendid displays to claim 3rd place in the series.

This was one of the best attended and most impressive displays of ability in all of the years I have been involved in the YCS competitions. The rise in standards and the fact that we now have a full regional squad for the national final means that this year's final, to be held at EICA on the 28th June will be a great day for Scotland South. Be there or be square!