

NORTH AMERICAN TREE CLIMBING CHAMPIONSHIP

SEPTEMBER 29-30 2018 PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND

The North American Tree Climbing Championship held in Providence, Rhode Island, was an amazing experience. All the top climbers of the North American continent came together in their best efforts to dominate the day through consistent performances in the preliminaries. All of us are and were fully capable of implementing a solid game plan. The top four men and three women made it into the Master's. In the end, the male and female champions played their best performances gracefully. James Earhart and Krista Strating. Both of these competitors are shining examples of what it means to be a champion both professionally and personally.

As a competitor, from the outside, the organizing of a highly competitive event, it looked like a fluid operation in spite of the rain that hammered the area all day prior and all morning of our designated check in and gear check times. Each and every volunteer; from sign-ups, gear checking, taking pictures, setting up events, leading and running events, to head judges, persons with mere tasks like operating stop watches and tending belay lines on ascent and belated speed event, everyone made it a successful day. As far as I know, there weren't any hiccups! Because of those people who volunteered their time for the long weekend, competitors got to get in the zone and implement our game plans. So, a huge thank you for all those people who organized and operated the NATCC.

Throwline, Ascent and Belayed are always events where each of us have to get points on the board. In Aerial Rescue and Work Climb, however, we have to get points on the board but our game plans vary very much, and that's where you get to see the beauty of different styles.

The Aerial Rescue event was a realistic and challenging scenario. It was 100 degrees outside, and the climber was responsive but not making any sense. The climber was hanging only by his lanyard and had a large laceration on his left forearm. The story was that the climber unclipped while trying to redirect, something happened during that time where he lost his main climbing line and consequently was suspended on the underside of a large limb by his lanyard only at a decent distance away from the trunk.

The work climb setup was a visually tricky one but nonetheless a fun one! It was not a big tree, but a medium sized White Oak. It was a scrapper kind of climb, with some tight angles. Usually the idea is to always put your weight on the line, but I felt this was more of a monkey climb kind of tree. A beautiful balance of strength and grace, more than speed, was the key in this gasser.

The Master's bells were hung in two trees next to each other. I didn't get to see all the competitors, but I did see Kyle McCabe, a beast who came in first in the preliminaries. He had a great start getting two lines in and headed up the tree, but his original game plan didn't pan out as he thought it would; had to change the game plan trying to get the first bell and that cost him time. He ran out after getting the third bell. I also had the privilege to watch the 2015 world tree climbing champion, James Earhart. He completed the Master's challenge, as always, with a calmness of composure and with such grace. It was what was needed to win the 2018 NATCC.

~Brick Reilly



NATCC pictures of Brick taken by fellow competitor Shawn Cheney

