

Nailing Your Competition Day

August 8, 2025

Posted By: **Marisa Romero** in [CWA Blog](#)



Competition day is a big deal for any coach. All of the training, coaching, and effort for both you and your athletes come to competition day. Showing up as your best self is the ultimate goal.

Article At A Glance

- **Writer:** Marisa Romero, an expert in youth coaching and Director of ABC Climbing Academy. She was the moderator for a panel on Creating Great Youth Teams at the 2025 CWA Summit.
- **Who Should Read:** This article is for our coaches and programming staff or folks in other roles who support/manage coaches.
- **What Will You Learn:** Ways to make comp-day the best it can be for yourself and your athletes.
- **Tie-Ins, Resources, or Further Reading:** We've got many articles that get near this topic. These two are great starters: [Building an Exceptional Coaching Team](#), [Mental Training for your Climbing Athletes](#)

Whether you are a youth or adult coach, coaching at a youth, collegiate, para, or elite event, being prepared is crucial. With the near-constant advancements in both the sport of climbing and USA Climbing rules and regulations, staying abreast of all the information can be daunting. Even seasoned coaches might feel a little intimidated. This article will share a few tips and tricks to make competition day the best it can be!

Be Prepared

What does being prepared look like? It is personal to everyone because ultimately, the point is that the more prepared you feel, the more confident and at ease you will be on the big day. Below are some pointers that have worked for me and other coaches I have worked with, but know that specifics to the competition and your climbers may differ.

- Have your device fully charged and bring a spare battery so you can check scores for accuracy.
- If you are managing multiple athletes and other coaches, have a communication system in place in advance, such as a dedicated group text, by calling, or even by walkie-talkie!

READ ALSO: Building an Exceptional Coaching Team

- For long competition days with little breaks in the schedule, plan your meals (and caffeine!) by using a delivery service or a supporter such as a team parent!
- Pack a bag beforehand with all the things that your climbers might forget. Include extra chalk, jackets, snacks, water, and basic medical supplies like band aids.
- Understand the appeal process and deadlines for each round of competition. If you must file an appeal under a deadline, it can be stressful. Create copies of pre-filled-out appeal forms for common ones, such as Control and Use.
- Bring a printed copy of the rulebook or a cheat sheet with information you find most relevant.
- Create a detailed timetable to track your day. It can include your athlete's isolation times, warm-up starts, chair times, and climb times.
- Use visualization (yes, the same strategy that you teach your athletes - coaches can use it too!) to practice important scenarios beforehand, such as important pep talks or difficult debriefs.

Tie in: Curious about more mental strategies to implement as a coach?

Check out [Mental Training for your Climbing Athletes](#)

- DRINK WATER! No, seriously. Sometimes it is easy to get caught up in the excitement, but it is important to take care of yourself.

Check Your Energy

As a coach, you know how important bringing the right energy is. The energy you bring to competition day is a crucial part of what shapes your team and each athlete's experience. If you are visibly nervous or uncomfortable, your team will pick up on it. Bring a confident and composed presence and those qualities will shine in your athletes.

Network, Network, Network

An exciting part of competition day that makes it different than usual practice is getting to see the field. However, the opportunities do not just lie in watching the other competitors, but also in networking with other coaches!

Coaches don't often get the opportunity to step outside their usual environment and hear different perspectives. Take advantage of the event to network, exchange ideas, and build lasting professional relationships.

The Best Networking Opportunities

Outside of competitions, one of the best places to network is the CWA Summit. It brings together not only coaches but also other climbing industry professionals like gym owners, operations professionals, routesetters, and more!

Expect the Unexpected

No matter how much you prepare, competition day will always throw some curveballs your way. Maybe a schedule changes last minute, a less-than-ideal isolation, or an appeal situation arises. Staying flexible and adaptable is key to handling these moments with confidence.

Remember that no matter what the outcome, you will always get to walk away from competition day having learned something new.

Remember to Have Fun

While it's easy to get caught up in the intensity of competition, remember why everyone is there in the first place: to have fun and try to win some medals!

Competition days are a celebration of all the hard work and dedication that climbers and coaches have put in, regardless of the outcome.

Embrace the excitement, cheer on your athletes, and take in the atmosphere. You spent the entire season preparing for these moments, so make the most of them!

About the Author



Marisa's background is a blend of high-performance coaching along with director roles specialized in youth programming. She has held key roles with Team Texas, Movement, and now ABC Climbing Academy. Her leadership as a director has been instrumental in shaping successful climbing programs and thriving communities. Additionally, she serves on several USA Climbing committees, demonstrating her commitment to the sport's growth and development.



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