

Steven Dimmitt <steven@thenuggetclimbing.com>

Jan 19, 2021, 12:58 PM

to Dave ▾

Hey Dave,

I thought of a few questions I wish I had asked you during the interview:

- During that period of time when you shot from 8b to 8c+, what did your finger strength look like starting out on that 21mm edge?
 - I.e. what sort of progression were you at for each grip when you started? Could you hang from one hand? Or did you need assistance? Etc.
 - What about after 6 months?
 - What about 18 months?
 - Where is your finger strength at nowadays for comparison?

I think this context could be really valuable for people. It seems that a lot of climbers who are new to fingerboarding have unrealistic expectations about their progress. I have certainly struggled with this.

I was thinking I could share your answers in the intro or outro, and maybe even throw a chart in the show notes for people to reference.

Cheers!

Steven



Dave MacLeod

to Steven ▾

Jan 20, 2021, 1:21 AM

Hi Steven,

Oh yeah that is an important point about the progressions. When I started I could hang with one hand plus assistance from a single finger (mono-pocket style, I show this on my How To Hangboard video on YouTube) on the other hand. I made rapid and steady progress through the first four weeks, slower progress out to 6 weeks, and then essentially imperceptible progress on the fingerboard itself. I was actually wondering whether it was really helping and considered stopping. It was only when I returned to rock projects in the autumn that the difference became apparent.

Beyond the initial neural adaptation, strength gains are slow and very hard won, unless you have gifted genetics and get all the other foundations of training right. A big factor that I think plays into people having unrealistic expectations is observing young climbers. They often have very light bodies without a lot of excess muscle and when they add finger strength training on top they can progress to an excellent strength-weight ratio very rapidly. But even for them it levels off and sometimes when they grow into their adult bodies they can actually go backwards.

The other point here is that measuring finger strength is not totally straightforward. Suspending your body by a few square cms of wood requires a lot of friction so that can change things. On the Beastmaker in the nearest big climbing gym to me, I could hang the small two finger pocket with one hand. I can't get nearly close to that on my own Beastmaker!! The gym's board has been used heavily and just seems to have much better friction. Its also obviously confounded by any weight changes. Clearly, if you have big gains, these are obvious. But if the gains are small, which they are likely to be, they might not be consistently detectable. So I tend to keep track using a working average across multiple sessions. A really strong or weak session on its own might be just an artefact of a bad sleep or humid conditions. But if the pattern persists over a week or two then its more likely to be a real effect.

After the 6 weeks I could hang on one hand but I don't count this because the patterning in my doorframe allowed me to get a tiny bit of thumb assistance which probably made a kg or two difference. These days I can hang on one hand with all the grip types. At my best I can hold a 4kg dumbbell in one hand on half crimp and last month I could hold an 8kg dumbbell with the three finger drag. I've never been able to do that before! I've only ever been able to hang with more than body weight this year. So although my body has a lot of battle scars of 28 years of climbing, it's still strong and possibly getting stronger in some areas.

Regards,

Dave MacLeod