



Scott Forrest: 2014 ITCC Men's Champion

By Tricia Duzan

the results, and I only placed in one event—third in Work Climb—I thought my competition was over for this year.”

It turned out that Scott's consistently strong work had scored well overall in the preliminary events. He was one of four competitors for the Men's Masters' Challenge. This year, Scott faced Jared Abrojena (Western Chapter), James Kilpatrick (New Zealand), and Johan Pihl (Sweden). Scott generally tries to have a plan; however, he sometimes has to resort to alternatives depending on how the first throw goes.

How did it go in the end? Scott won the 2014 Men's Masters' Challenge by a 0.67 margin over Johan Pihl.

“I landed or grabbed all of the jumps/swings I went for.”

Always looking ahead to future competitions, Scott makes mental notes of the small missteps he made during his winning climb. He pledges to keep them in mind and get back to practice in anticipation of another Masters' Challenge.

He draws most of his inspiration from fellow New Zealand climbers Paul Wynen, Andy Harrison, Tony Wilson, Paul Kenny, Chrissy Spence, and Elena O'Neil. As a younger climber, Scott learns new techniques that these competitors bring back from various travels and competitions. Whether conversing at local grass-roots competitions to the competitions on the international stage, it's this kind of camaraderie that keeps him motivated to compete: sharing knowledge, cheering for one another, and “knowing your peers want everyone to do the best they can.”

Scott Forrest (ISA New Zealand Chapter) is 33 and has been a working arborist for 16 years. He has been climbing competitively at the regional and chapter level since 2001. For the last seven years, Scott has been travelling around the world visiting friends and family, and climbing trees in over 20 different countries.

“I have seen many interesting things in those countries,” Scott says, “but I still call New Zealand home.”

Scott was the 2013 men's returning champion, but he also qualified to compete as winner of the 2014 Asia-Pacific Tree Climbing Championship.

Furthermore, his accomplishment in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, makes him a three-time world champion. Scott previously claimed ITCC victory in Sydney, Australia (2011) and Toronto, Ontario, Canada (2013).

Scott is a self-employed contract climber, meaning his daily routine varies widely. Most of his work is done in the company of friends whom he has known for years. Scott's work provides the majority of the training he needs to compete at a high level.

“I think the best training for me is pruning large, spreading trees on a regular basis,” he says. “It allows me to practice throw line, footlock (in smaller trees), ascent systems, moving through the tree canopy (swings and jumps), and body positioning. Working alongside many other experienced climbers gives me the opportunity to discuss potential techniques that may be of benefit for the competitions.”

When asked whether there was any added pressure this year, as the returning champion, Scott noted he was excited but took things in stride.

“I try to treat each competition with an open approach. Anything can happen on the comp day. In a way, it's kind of like golf, you compete against yourself and it's your own efforts that can make it or break it for you on the day. This year, after the prelims, I was not sure if I had done enough to make it through to the Masters' Challenge. It's hard to say how good of a day you've had when there is such a large group of fantastic climbers. When they called out



“Tree climbing has been a huge part of my life and I believe it will be for years to come.”

Jo Hedger: 2014 ITCC Women's Champion

The 2014 ITCC Women's Masters' Challenge Champion is no stranger to winning. This is Josephine "Jo" Hedger's third title. Representing the ISA United Kingdom/Ireland Chapter, Jo has previously taken the ITCC title in St. Louis, Missouri (2008) and Chicago, Illinois (2010). This year, she also took first in the Aerial Rescue and Head-to-Head Footlock events in addition to placing third in Secured Footlock.

Jo was initially nervous about qualifying for the Masters' Challenge event, but all in all, she was personally very satisfied with her performance.

"You are always your worst critic and there are areas you would like to have done slightly differently. But during those moments of decisionmaking under the pressure of the clock and in front of a crowd, I felt I did a good climb. I kept to my plan, and it seemed to be a logical one. I also have fallen foul to breaking branches and



being disqualified in the Masters' before, so one of my main goals was to move efficiently, but carefully."

On occasion, Jo wonders why she keeps returning to the ITCC competitions due to the ever-increasing cost of competing on the international circuit. The travel cost and missed time off work for competition and for pre-competition training accumulates quickly. Fortunately, she feels the rewards and personal experience are well worth it. Jo is thankful for all the continuing education of arborists on climbing techniques, the travel to places she would have never chosen on her own for a holiday, and the ability to climb species of trees that she has never climbed previously. On a more personal level, she values being with old and new friends and the overall sense of accomplishment of a job well done.

The opportunity to meet up with acquaintances is one of Jo's favorite components of the international competition, commenting that, "The 'tree family' part of the competitions is very important to me. Also, the whole feel of the event—it's the final stage in your years of climbing—and to be there is so exciting. This year was very well run and had a relaxed, organized feel."

This was Jo's first visit to Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and she couldn't believe the vastness of Lake Michigan. Jo liked the Milwaukee atmosphere, which offered big city opportunities without the "big city" feel. Thinking of her efforts at this year's ITCC, she described her attitude as "very relaxed," nurturing her original feeling and love for the international competition. She has no regrets, and remains focused on her passion for climbing while enjoying international competition.

At the end of the event, Jo was particularly pleased to find the "make your own ice cream sundae" table set up on the trade show floor (Sunday night). It was a well-deserved reward for this three-time champion!

Tricia Duzan is ISA's educational administrator.