



About

ISA International Tree Climbing Championships

Purpose:

The purpose of the International Tree Climbing Championships (ITCC) is to provide competitive but educational opportunities for working Arborists to demonstrate and exchange new climbing techniques, increase the interaction between various firms and members in the industry, and provide positive public exposure for the profession. This is accomplished through developing and maintaining rules for competition, technical advice and support, and administrative guidance for a series of qualifying competitive events held by chapters and associate organizations worldwide, as well as regional events. These activities culminate with the International World Championship held annually in conjunction with the ISA Annual International Conference.



History

The first tree climbing competitions were held in California as a way to train for the classic skills that would prepare a climber equipped with nothing more than a rope to have the ability to save a life in an aerial rescue. The competitions grew as more and more tree care companies encouraged their workers to participate.

The Western Chapter of the ISA then began to incorporate the competitions as an official chapter event. Due to its popularity and influence, Western Chapter members solicited the Board of the ISA to hold tree climbing competitions as part of its annual conference. The first official "ISA Jamboree" was held in 1976 in St. Louis, MO. Over the years, new events and techniques were introduced and a formal set of rules was developed.

The event expanded internationally in 1994 when the first European climber entered the competition. The European expansion brought even more innovative techniques and spurred a revitalization in the competition events which was introduced at the 1996 competition. This included the addition of a championship round known as the Masters' Challenge and the name change to the International Tree Climbing Championship.

Now in addition to the ITCC World Championship, the ISA holds three regional events held annually in Europe, North America, and the Asia Pacific. The winners of these events, as well as winners of competitions held by ISA chapters and associate organizations around the globe, are invited to the World Championship.

The ITCC has reinvented the tree climbing equipment and tree care industries by bringing the end users and manufacturers together. The result has been an explosion of inventions and products specifically designed for tree care applications.

Industry safety standards in nearly every participating country have benefited from these innovations. The events also instill a respect for the role of the tree climber and a strong focus for the individuals of the climber community to improve safety in the work environment for all tree care workers.

ITCC Events

The first day of competition consists of five preliminary events (Throwline, Footlock, Belayed Speed Climb, Work Climb, and Aerial Rescue.). Competitors are scored individually in each event, the competitor with the highest score is the winner of that event. First, second, and third place for men and women are awarded for each event.

Competitors' total scores for all five events are combined and the male and female competitors with the highest combined score from the preliminary events move on to the Masters' Challenge Championship on day two.

The Masters' Challenge consists of one event and competitors are scored on technique and skill. The champions are the male and female with the highest score.

Throwline:

The Throwline is a timed event that tests the competitors' ability to accurately place a climbing line in a tree at heights of up to 60 feet. The competitor attempts to toss a line through two of eight targets. Each target is worth a different amount of points depending on difficulty.

A throwline is used for climbers to set their climbing line into a tree. A rope must be set and a climbing line installed in order for a tree worker to ascend a tree to perform tree work. Throwlines must be installed at a point that will be sturdy and secure to accommodate the climbers's weight with gear while working in the tree.

Secured Footlock:

The Secured Footlock measures the contestant's ability to perform a vertical ascent into a tree using a specific approved hitch for fall protection and the footlock rope-climbing method on a doubled climbing line. The men climb to 49'2.5" and the women climb to 39'4.5". The event is timed, with a maximum time limit of 60 seconds, and the contestant with the fastest time wins.

This climbing method is often used by tree workers to ascend into the tree because it is faster and less tiring than other methods. Even though the competition judges on speed, in the work place the emphasis is on efficiency not speed.

Belayed Speed Climb:

The Belayed Speed Climb tests the climber's ability to climb a predetermined route from the ground to about 60 feet up a tree using a belayed climbing system for safety. This event is timed, and the competitor who reaches and rings the final bell in the shortest time is the winner. Sometimes multiple bells are used to mark the route, in this case all the bells must be rung in order to complete the event.

Belaying is a method of securing and slowing a climbing line. If someone is belayed then that means someone is tending slack in the rope as they ascend the tree or they are using a climbing knot or a mechanical device to slow the line.

This event demonstrates that tree workers must determine the best and most efficient route to take to reach the top of the tree to avoid getting the rope snagged on branches causing them to break limbs or damage the tree.

Work Climb:

The Work Climb tests the competitor's ability to move about a tree using a tree-climbing rope and harness. Competitors start in the tree and are required to visit five work stations throughout the tree to perform a specified task after which they must ring a bell.

The stations include handsaw, limb toss, pole pruning, limb walk, and landing. Each of these stations simulate tasks that are performed by tree workers when working aloft.

Stations in the Masters' Challenge are similar to the Work Climb.

Aerial Rescue:

The Aerial Rescue event is a timed event that tests the climber's ability to climb to and safely lower an injured climber who is unable to descend without assistance. Competitors are provided with details of the rescue scenario, and they are required to assess the situation and plan a rescue.



This event simulates a job-site emergency. Injuries can occur and as the first person onsite it may be up to the trained tree worker to apply his/her knowledge and technical skills to rescue an injured person in a safe and efficient manner so they can receive medical attention.

Interesting Facts:

- **The 1999 ITCC had the first non-US Masters' Champion, Bernd Strasser, of Germany who is now an eight-time champion.**
- **2001 was the first year there was a women's division champion, Christina Engel of Germany.**
- **2012 ITCC consists of 41 men, and 20 women representing 16 countries.**

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