

Mina Markovic

# World Cup Training

By Jackie Hueftle



**I**n the past couple of seasons, 25-year-old Slovenian Mina Markovic has become a regular figure on the IFSC World Cup Lead and Bouldering podiums. She was overall Lead World Champion and overall combined (lead+speed+bouldering) World Champion in 2011 and 2012. She's been climbing since age nine and competing, sometimes winning, since the early 2000's, but her recent streak of high-level success shows that something has clearly changed. We tracked Mina down at a Slovenian Climbing Team Training Camp in Germany to figure out just exactly how she's made the jump to the top of the world, and what advice she has for others who aspire to be World Champions.



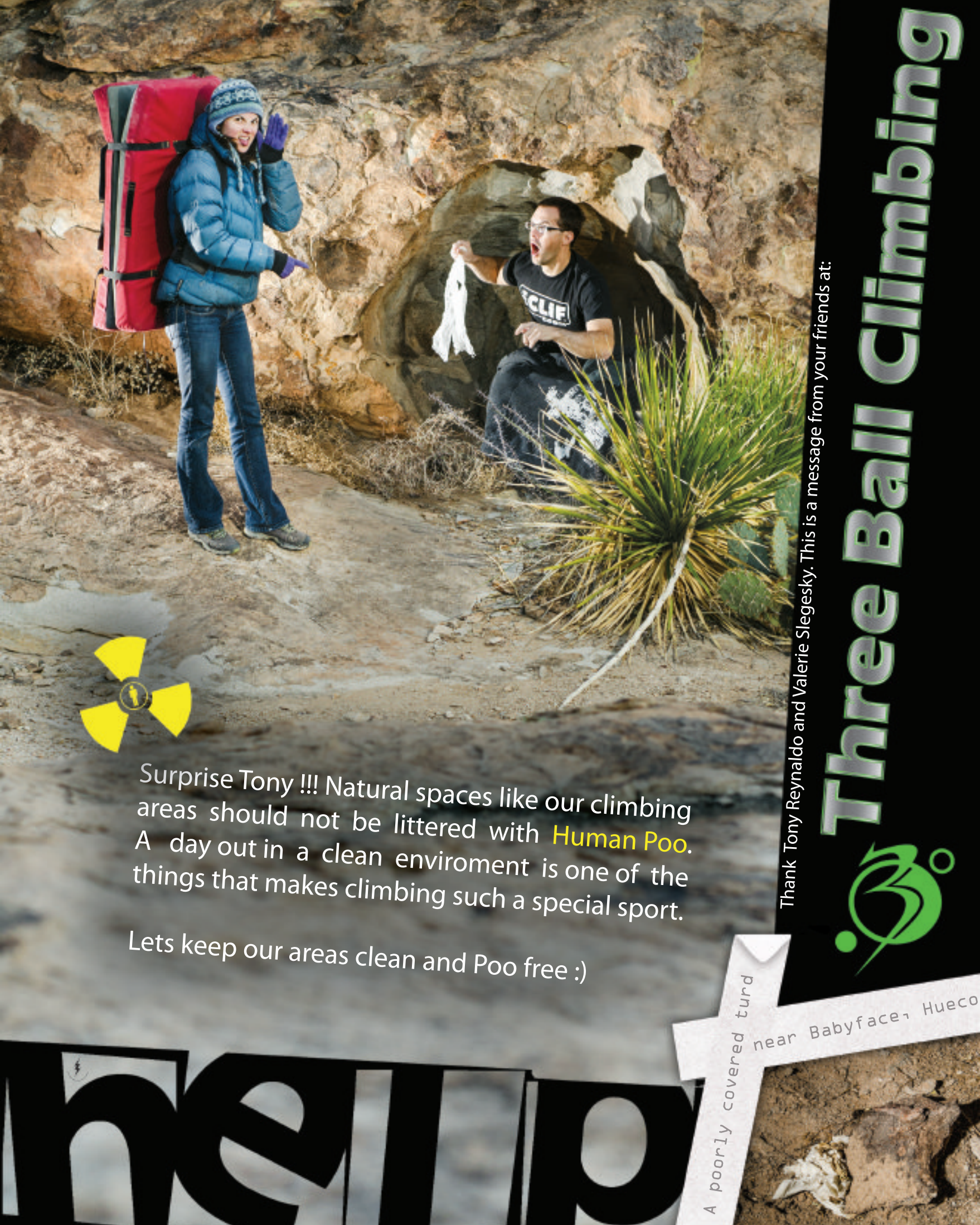
Image courtesy of Stanko Gruden

## Getting Started

*I never actually had a 'plan' to be a World Cup competitor. I have always just enjoyed climbing, competing, and pushing myself to be better—pushing myself and my limits higher—so my results and my fitness got better and better every year.*

*A few years ago I realized that I was really enjoying climbing and doing well in competitions, so why not do 'something more' if I had all the chance (my coach, talent, training, fitness, motivation, and so on) to do it?*

*I have been working with my coach since 2008, and even though we didn't know each other very well at first it was possible to see progress. After we got to know each other better and the training and learning combined I began having even better results.*



Surprise Tony !!! Natural spaces like our climbing areas should not be littered with **Human Poo**. A day out in a clean environment is one of the things that makes climbing such a special sport.

Lets keep our areas clean and Poo free :)

Thank Tony Reynaldo and Valerie Slegesky. This is a message from your friends at:

# Three Ball Climbing



# the 3b

A poorly covered turd

near Babyface, Hueco





Images courtesy of Stanko Gruden

## Training

*I train about 6 times per week. At the beginning of the year I mostly train for 5 days and then rest one. Later I switch to 4-1. Usually I work with my coach about 2-3 hours, which may not sound like a lot compared to other sports, but in this time I climb really intensively.*

*On a typical training day I warm up at home by doing exercises for my arms and then stretching my biceps, shoulders, lats, back, and legs. I don't have a wall or a pull-up bar or any other 'strength' equipment at home, but I do antagonist exercises with a Thera-band to help strengthen my non-climbing muscles and support my shoulders. Before, both my shoulders would go out of place or just start to hurt, but for the last two years since I've been doing this I have not been having as many shoulder problems.*

*I think it is important to have good flexibility for climbing, especially in bouldering, because sometimes you need to put your feet way up high or get into weird*

*"To be a top competitor or athlete you almost need someone to train you, especially on days when you're feeling a little tired, because it is much easier to work when you have a coach—someone who knows how and how much to push you."*

*positions and if you are flexible you can find interesting solutions. [ed. The "Slovenian Stem" is one solution that Mina tends to find—it's basically a stem in the splits that she then straight-leg dropknees out of by twisting.]*

*When I get to the gym I warm up on easier climbs before starting with my coach.*

*My coach usually has me do one more warm-up route (which is not really easy, you're lucky to top it out) and then I do what is on the plan. At the beginning of the year (bouldering season) it is more short routes (about 15-20 moves on the boulder wall) sometimes climbing with one foot or hand-to-foot [where you hand-foot match every move. Good for building body tension and full-body strength]. Occasionally I campus the route, but not often. Later in the year (during transition to route season) I start to climb 50, 60, or even 70 move long routes and fewer hard hand-feet moves.*

*I cool down with some easy climbs and do stretching and more antagonist exercises at home.*

Having a coach makes it easier to train and it saves you a LOT of energy. I climbed for most of 10 years without a coach, just with friends and on my own. I had developed my own sort of climbing technique but it needed a lot of work to make it better.

I think if you want to progress on technique you definitely need someone to stay on your back and watch carefully what you are doing and tell you how to try and make it better or different.

I also think that if you want to be a top competitor or athlete you almost need someone to train you, especially on days when you're feeling a little tired, because it is much easier to work when you have a coach—someone who knows how, and how much, to push you.

The plan varies depending on the season I am training for, and it is not in my hands. My coach plans out what I need to do. Sometimes I feel that it is easier, sometimes pretty hard, sometimes longer or shorter, but it doesn't really matter what my "feeling" is, because if I am in really good shape everything seems easy to me, and I don't see or notice that I am training hard. Sometimes it is opposite, but I try to minimize the 2nd feeling, but my feeling about the training is not the right ruler of what is actually going on.



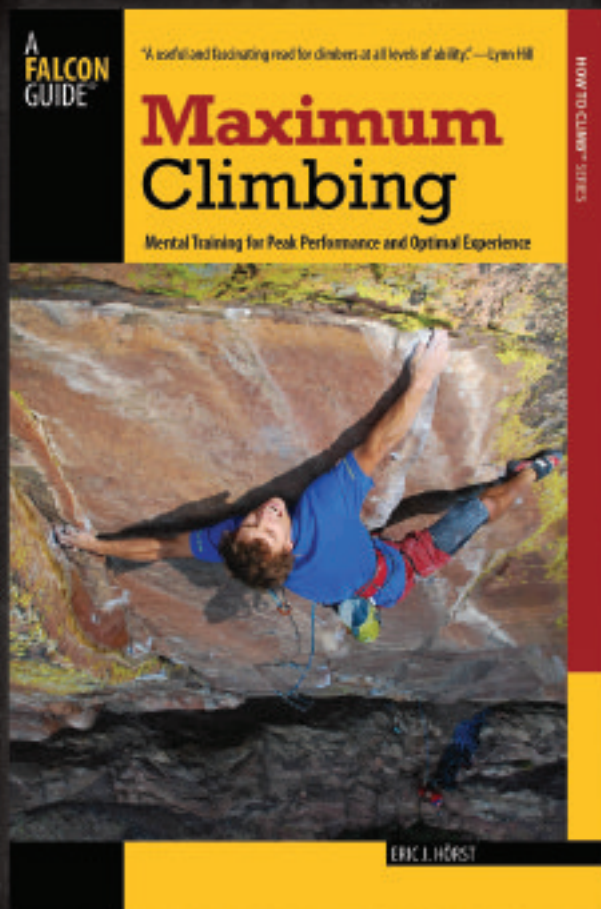
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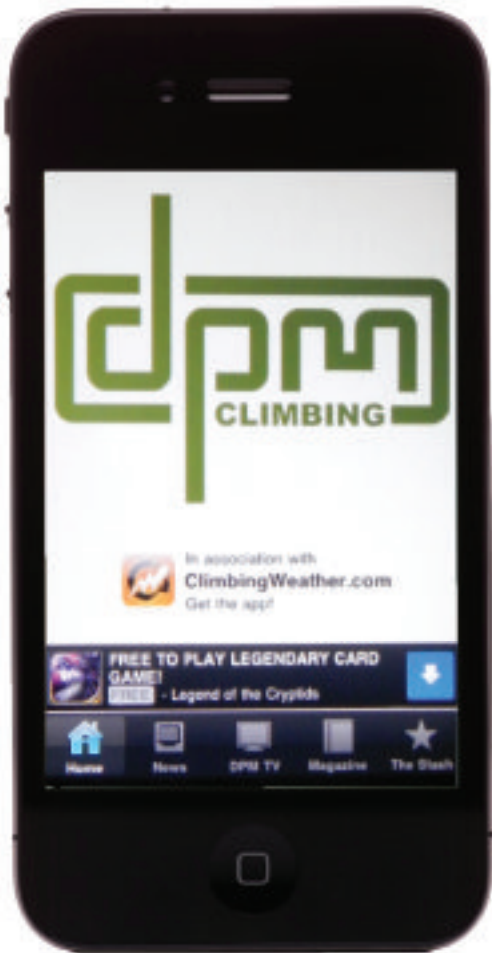
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*Sleep is important. I go to bed every day at about the same time (around midnight), and I wake up between 8 and 9 am. I have found out that if I mess up my sleeping routine it takes me a few days to make it normal again. I have also found out that on days when I train really hard I usually sleep for an extra hour, and when I'm not climbing at all I wake up after only 6 or 7 hours.*

### **Competing**

*Timing is important. I think that last year, especially in bouldering at the beginning of the season, more things that I/he/we were doing just combined together at the right time for success at comps. In lead, I am all the time just looking to be in good shape, so the results are (in my opinion) a reflection of the shape I am in.*

*I don't do any specific mental preparation. I just try to warm up well, feel relaxed but motivated, psyched, and ready to go to the comp. I think it is very important for me that before the comp I feel in training that I am in good shape so I trust myself in competition more and also maybe risk more because I know I am able to do it.*

*On comp day I usually start warming up about two hours before my planned start (in lead you never know exactly when it will be your turn, but you can guess fairly close). I usually start warming up with easy running, jumping, or something like that, just to 'wake me up' a bit. Then I do my regular stretching, and if the competition is outside I really like to stretch in the sun. I also do my Thera-band exercises the same as I do at home. All together it takes less than a half hour, but between I am doing other things—talking with teammates or coaches, crosswords, snacking, reading a magazine—unimportant things that help keep me calm. Sometimes in isolation there is a looooooof of time to spare...if it is 3 hours 'til my turn I might sleep a bit. If we are allowed, I will go out and watch some of the other competitors climb a bit (during qualifier rounds if it is flash format).*

*Many competitors listen to music between warming up and preparing for the comp, but for me it just doesn't work the best, so I prefer doing other things. I think everyone has to find out what activities suit them the best. It can be quite a long process of competitions and knowing yourself to find out what will work best for you.*

### **Life**

*I try to eat healthy and I try to eat enough. I really like muesli, all different kinds, and also really like to mix it by myself with different cereals (oats, rice, quinoa), seeds, nuts, dried fruits, and so on. All the time I have them with me. Usually I eat them in the morning with milk or yogurt and sometimes after training. Lunch or dinner I cook with my boyfriend or friends, usually some pasta, paella, meat, fish, or something like that. Also I am not afraid of a big salad.*

*During the break in December I do drink alcohol, and when I drink it I like it—usually red, mulled, or some other wine. Maybe this is strange, but during the year when I climb, train, and compete, I have no desire for alcohol. I think climbing keeps me satisfied from day to day.*

*Honestly, I do not climb much outside. I would prefer to spend time outdoors and on the rocks, but at the moment if I want to be on top of competition climbing in lead and in bouldering I just don't have time to do it more than a few times a year. If I am training inside I trust myself more and have the feeling I am more able to prepare for competition. I do love being outside, so for now every year during the "off season" in December, I spend a week or two doing easier fun climbing with friends at some nice, possibly sunny, destination!*

*On rest days I go outside—run, walk, or have coffee with friends or see movies—and answer emails and do other work. I am working towards a degree in psychology and I still have some exams left, so if I have extra energy I try to learn a bit. Probably about half of my rest days each year are spent in the team van driving from comp to comp or to some climbing place, but when they are not I really like to go to the beach and go swimming.*