



August, 2021

To Our Boulders Community:

Happy September! This comment response will address feedback we've received in the last part of July, and the entirety of August.

As a reminder, comments can be submitted anytime to our [three online comment boxes](#), and to our two physical comment boxes (one in each location). We do our best to respond as frequently as possible in a public forum, and for urgent or easy-to-take-care-of matters, we often fix things on the fly. While we don't address every comment in our public responses, we do try to get the gist of all the comments represented, either through combining comments or addressing a concept more generally. If you have a question about how your comment was (or wasn't) responded to, or the response process in general, feel free to email community@bouldersgym.com.

We can't thank you enough for contributing to improvement at Boulders. We really appreciate the comments, especially the ones which spark thoughtful internal conversations and engagement with our community. We're happy and privileged to serve each and every one of you.

Sincerely,

Boulders Climbing Gym

General Feedback - COVID Concerns:

We hope everyone is happy with the mask mandate being re-instated in our gyms as well as in Dane County generally. We urge everyone who is eligible to get vaccinated so that we can kick this thing eventually and get back to seeing your smiling faces. Until then, we are excited to see your cool masks, worn correctly, the whole time you're in the gym.

General Feedback:

Comment: *I've been mocked by regulars at the gym because I couldn't onsight a 3/4, half of those regulars are friends with staff/setters who say nothing, and the men who climb there do not respect the space of other climbers, butt in front of women before we climb, and beta spray constantly.*

Response: This is clearly against our community guidelines, which all staff, members, and climbers must abide by. We are so sorry that you had this experience, and absolutely do not condone this behavior. If you are comfortable, please either fill out a safe-space alert form providing more details, including the name(s) of the offender(s) if you know them, or send an email to community@bouldersgym.com and we can take action from there.

In general, we know that misogyny is prevalent in the gym community and that our gyms are no exception. We have been working with a film crew to create new cultural PSAs and you can expect to see those integrated into gym life soon. We are also increasing staff training around these issues, including bystander intervention training. This is also going to come up further down in our "Big Picture Feedback" section.

Comment: *Please bring back yoga every day!*

Response: We're huge fans of yoga and would love to do this given the interest. Unfortunately, we've had a low turnout recently and our instructors don't love showing up to an empty class. If we see those numbers trend back up we can think about expanding, make sure you bring your friends! :)

Comment: *5 times taller*

Response: That would be sick. We will be getting new floors in soon that will increase our bouldering height limit, and stay tuned for new, taller gyms in our future.

Comment: *More auto-belays and more food in the vending machine*

Response: We've restocked our vending machines, hopefully to your liking. There will be more auto-belays coming soon; unfortunately, webbing is hard to come by at the moment so a few of ours are currently out of service. They'll be back as soon as safely possible!

Route Setting Feedback:

Comment: *I'm hoping for some different style routes for beginners and warming up. I think the setting at the east side is boring for lower-ranked problems. I miss more of the easier, juggy, dynamic move problems that cover area and feel fun to do. I wanna say more like [a specific setter]'s style from years back. Maybe [they] still set downtown?*

*I think both beginners and members enjoy the occasional "easy holds" monkey-like fun problem and aren't always trying to work super hard on footwork and crimping, etc. On bad holds.
Thanks in advance for hearing me out*

Response:

We appreciate your feedback on your preferred climbing styles and the lack of diversity in lower graded climbs. We want to make sure there's a range in all grades, of course. That said, we also receive feedback that easier climbs aren't technical enough, are too much like ladders, or are too jumpy/dynamic (sometimes in the same feedback response), so you understand it's a line we are trying to walk.

Setting style is subjective, as we all know. We appreciate having this "finger on the pulse" as it were, of what styles folks prefer or feel that we are lacking. While we can't promise that easier climbs will all shift over to juggy jumpy problems, we really do value this take and will make sure the setters are aware of it. Keep the comments coming!

Comment: *crack climbing?*

Response: Oh we wish! Unfortunately, the risk of injury is a little high, and re-doing our walls to include cracks isn't in the cards for us right now. We can look into acquiring a hand jam style hang board for the training room, perhaps? Or maybe some crack-style holds, if we could implement them safely? We'll look into it. Thanks for the fun suggestion, we hope Devils Lake can fill your

crack climbing needs for now!

Comment: *Not enough 5.10-5.12 routes on auto-belays for solo climbing*

Response: We're so glad you're liking our new auto belays and climbing at such an advanced level! Because auto-belays are our most accessible rope option (no belay knowledge needed) we try to keep them at least somewhat in that accessible grade range. We hope you can still find a use for them in endurance training and are able to find rope partners to climb more challenging top rope routes. We should be adding some more auto-belays in the near future, at which time you can expect to see diversity in those grades increase. For those solo days in the meantime, perhaps try eliminating holds from easier climbs to increase their challenge!

Comment: *There are way too many routes in the grades above v6 when most gym population can barely climb a Boulders V3*

Response: This is a metric we track really closely, and we're glad to know that it's important to you too. Our route setters have recordings of every grade they intend to set, and then we compare those numbers with the onsight and project grades people report to us in our quarterly survey. You're absolutely correct that these curves should match closely, and that they should be skewed "left", because everyone needs warmups, and not everyone needs v8s. We'll take another look at these curves and skew given your feedback.

Two distinct comments, addressed together: *#1- The route setting team is lacking diversity in strength. #2-and [are] losing touch with what easy grades feel like"*

Response: This is a constant struggle among setting teams. As you can imagine, if you bring a setter onto the team who climbs v2, and then you employ them to do a climbing intensive job, they quickly gain climbing skills and are soon no longer climbing v2. However, we have recently had a few new setters join the team, who are bringing grade diversity, among other things, to that group. Additionally, the idea that stronger setters are worse at setting low grades is a bit of a fallacy. Those more experienced setters are often the ones setting those really fun lower-grade climbs because they have a wider range of movement they're comfortable setting.

Comment: *With routes that require specific body positioning, could you please be more mindful of people less than 5'5*

Response: Yes, you have good company in the climbing team coaches on this feedback. We've been in conversation with the route setters and are taking new metrics of kids' reaches to provide setters with so that they're able to accommodate that wider range of body sizes. Thanks for the feedback and please let us know if it doesn't improve!

Comment: *Would it be possible to mark the newly set and soon-to-be-removed routes like you did in the past? Sometimes it's really hard to tell/remember what's new and I'd hate to miss out on a great route because of that.*

Response: We can run this up the flagpole and see what folks think. In the meantime, you should see whiteboards at each location that have the upcoming re-set, as well as what was just set. If those boards aren't there, feel free to ask desk staff to put them back up!

Comment: *Would you consider changing your bouldering color cards to have both the color and something to indicate the hierarchy in the color palette?*

e.g. each card could have colored stripes, where pink would have one stripe b/c it is the lowest grouping, red 2 stripes, orange 3 stripes, etc... it would just make things clearer, also especially if folks are colorblind. But there's probably some theme more fun or aesthetic than stripes.

Response: Currently each tag has its corresponding grade range written on it, which should assist with this issue. However, we love this idea and are talking to the route setters about implementing it. If anyone has other design ideas, please email community@bouldersgym.com or fill out a feedback form to let us know!

Big Picture Feedback*

**This is a new segment of feedback we are going to dig into as a community. Here we will address one or more issues that came up during this feedback period that feel core to the construction of community, who we are as a business, and how we would like to engage with each other moving forward. Please feel free to email community@bouldersgym.com if you have any questions, or if you would like to engage in further discussion regarding any of our Big Picture Feedback comments or responses. We think this works best as a dialogue and would love your input.*

Issue: *This month we didn't have a specific comment, but rather would like to address the prevalence of toxic masculinity in gym spaces generally, as well as specifically in our gyms.*

Specifically, we've recently had several cases where femme staff members and climbers have received unwanted attention from male climbers. This attention has included following climbers around the gym, flirting with or asking out staff members, and commenting on climbers' appearance among other behaviors.

Response: As a team, Boulders has taken some steps to hopefully reduce the risk of this behavior. First and most importantly, we have spoken to every person who has been accused of an offense like this, and in some cases have revoked memberships. We're also planning on running a bystander intervention training for our staff, and have updated our feedback responses to include a safe-space alert system where climbers or staff can ask for help in real time.

However, we would all prefer that these issues be avoided in the first place rather than handled after the fact. To create cultural change we have updated our hiring practices and staff training, and have filmed a series of short cultural re-set videos that should soon be on display in the gyms. We also host queer and femme affinity nights (Queer Climbing Social and Madison Women Climbers).

We know that this still isn't enough, and we are asking our community for help doing more. We want to hear your suggestions, thoughts, comments, and experiences. Have you seen this done well anywhere? Do you have ideas we could implement at Boulders?

Email your thoughts and suggestions to community@bouldersgym.com, we want to hear what you have to say!