

## Robyn Erbesfield-Raboutou

World Cup Champion; World-Champion Mom; Climber; Trainer; Teacher

In the 1990s, the Georgia native Robyn Erbesfield-Raboutou, 44, swept the World Cup four years running, redpointed 5.14a (the second woman to do so), and onsighted 5.13c. Through her no-BS teachings, she has brought to greatness Emily Harrington, Chris Sharma, Daniel Woods, Adam Stack, and countless others. Erbesfield-Raboutou spends nine months each year in Boulder, Colorado, with her husband, French rock maestro Didier Raboutou, son, Shawn (9), and daughter, Brooke (6), both burgeoning comp killers. The family summers at St. Antonin, France. Today, her main business push is ABC for Kids ([abckid.net](http://abckid.net)), a unique, climbing-centered athletic program for the wee ones, ages 3 to 7.

**I HAVE NEVER CLIMBED** with rock shoes and socks. I have never read a climbing book.

**I DON'T KNOW IF IT'S SOMETHING** I've learned or if it's something that's always been really important to me, but the goal with climbing is to keep having fun. And to make sure that it continues to be a game. When I climb my best, it's because I'm in that state of mind.

**DURING MY TYPICAL DAY IN FRANCE**, the kids and I generally have breakfast and start to play, and the playing in our day ends up being climbing. The kids keep that momentum, and every time we go to France, all they want to do is climb every day.

**WHEN I FIRST DID A WORKSHOP** for Chris Sharma, he was so strong, but that kid had zero footwork. So I created mini-circuits that drilled him on his feet. The fine line that I asked him to follow was that his feet could not come off. He didn't need to climb 5.13; he just needed to do this simple traverse for the hands but that had really specific instructions for his feet.

**I'M SURE I'D BE** some bike rider by now if it weren't for the fact that my children were so passionate about the sport. My kids have the bug—I say they have the "Virus."

**I'VE LEARNED THE MOST ABOUT** movement from François Legrand. You could spin his head any different way, and he climbs with such perfection and such knowledge of where he is and where he's going. If I was to ask François, "Do you remember the blue route in my home gym from 15 years ago?" he could probably still tell me the moves.

**FRANÇOIS AND I** used to push each other to the point of training till 1 o'clock in the morning and getting up and doing it again the next day. We'd climb with headlamps, and then I wanted to do another set of laps, and then if I finished, he'd do another set of laps. And if he finished the night before, then, by golly, I got to finish the next night—and we challenged each other like that.

**I'M TALKING TO YOU** and you're a climber—you know that bug. It's hard. You can take a break and go to another sport, but you're not happy until you come back to climbing.

**LAST TIME I TRAINED** with François was the summer before last. He came with his son, Shani, and his little girl. We climbed in the morning, and then in the afternoon it was all about the kids—swimming, taking them climbing, jumping on the trampoline... But that same energy was there—François and I went on some runs, and our minds were ticking like the old days. You could see if we didn't have families, we'd be going back to that same hardcore, train-until-midnight thing.

**OUR KIDS DON'T LET US** take rest days, and I don't want to rest either—you know, why rest?

**DIDIER AND THE KIDS AND I** were in Spain this summer, in Rodellar. On the last day, Shawn fell a move before the end of this particular 5.12. And then he tried a second time, and a third time, and a fourth. He was 9 years old, it was 8:30 at night, and he was just exhausted. He cried the entire hike out, saying, "We can't leave! It's not fair—you promised me we'd stay another day to do this route!" But then we had a little dinner and some ice cream, and the smile came back on Shawn's face. He completely forgot about that climb.

**AT ABC KIDS**, we do relays where four kids line up here, along the climbing wall, and four kids line up there, with two pieces of blank paper in the middle. And they're trying to draw the face of a cat, one team before the other. One kid contributes a circle, and one contributes the eye, and one draws in the ears, and the idea is to get them climbing. But they're cheering each other on... that to me is more exciting than to see someone hanging by their toes and being silly.

**IT'S 3 O'CLOCK**, and I'm picking the kids up at school. I like to be the one that's there at the door—at the front door of the school rather than have a nanny. I don't want to give that up. I'm going to milk it as long as I can.