



THOMAS MAXON HANGS from a section of the new Beta Bouldering Gym on Dec. 5 in Flagstaff. Maxson is an employee at the new climbing facility.

BELOW: Bryce Snyder, owner of the Beta Bouldering Gym, works a route on Dec. 5 in his new climbing facility. (Photos by Jake Bacon/Arizona Daily Sun)

New gym bigger and boulder

Bryce Snyder is counting on local climbers wanting an indoor challenge beyond vertical walls.

By **JOE FERGUSO**
Sun Staff Reporter

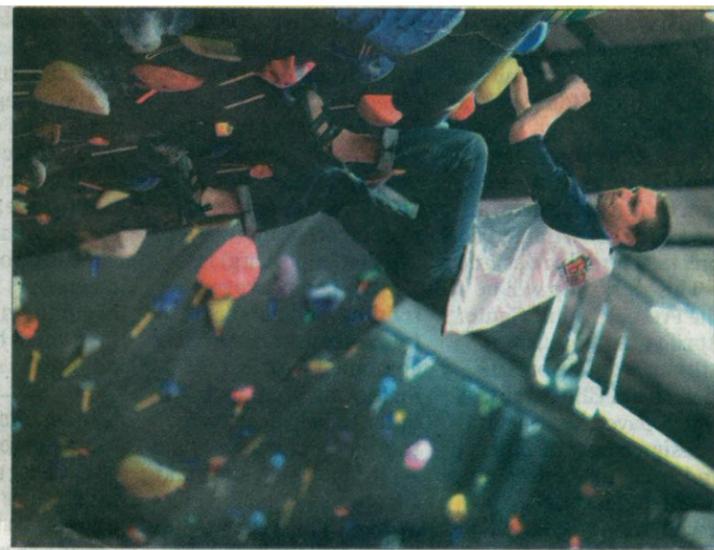
Northern Arizona offers a nearly limitless landscape of choices for climbers of every stripe, from challenging cliffs to big boulders.

The weather, however, is less cooperative.

Bryce Snyder has spent the last few years toying with the idea of opening a new kind of gym, focusing on a specific type of climbing known as bouldering.

"I knew the community needed it," he said.

Earlier this year, Snyder left his job at an environmental consulting company to open the Beta Bouldering Gym out of a 6,000-square-foot warehouse just off Butler Avenue.



See **GYM**, C3

GYM

from Page C1

He spent years trying to find the right midtown Flagstaff location for his dream.

"I had a business plan drafted for years," he said. "The hardest part of opening a gym like this is finding the right location!"

Snyder sank his life savings and brought in investors from the local climbing community to help him open the gym last month, building a monument to the sport.

He declined to disclose how much he spent to open the gym.

The 17-foot-high walls offer a total of 4,500 square feet of climbable terrain, with dozens of color-coated paths for customers of every ability - from novice to expert-level climbers.

Snyder, who has been climbing for the last 19 years, says age is not a good indicator of ability.

He witnessed little children climbing some of the hardest routes with no trouble on the first day he opened the gym.

"We had 0-year-olds climbing to the top," he said.

In a gym where there are no ropes in most areas, a 10-inch-thick foam pad covers most of the floor, ready for climbers who slip, fall or otherwise succumb to gravity.

Even the owner falls sometimes. He admits it hurts more now than when he was first climbing.

"I am in my mid- to late-20s now, it isn't like it was in my 20s," he says.

The gym does have a roped climbing wall set up in one corner, designed to train curious newbies as well as play host to children's birthday parties.

A destination location for the core bouldering climbers of the commu-

nity, Snyder said his staff will be changing the location of the climbing holds frequently.

"We are shooting for every two weeks, that is the product we are offering to our customers," he said.

Climbers are goal-oriented, he explains, often pushing themselves to their physical limits to climb to the top using a specific route.

By changing those holds frequently, climbers will have new routes to conquer without having to try holds that are beyond their current physical abilities.

Most of the walls have overhangs, offering a tougher challenge than simply climbing a typical, horizontal wall.

He said year-round training is important to the climbing community:

"When a (bouldering) climber wants to train, they need a gym like this," he said. "There may be two or three months where you can't climb (due to the weather.)"

Another challenge will be to convince the uninitiated to try the gym as a new outlet for recreation and physical fitness, especially during the cold winter months.

The gym offers instruction and gear rental to allow prospective climbers to try the sport inexpensively before committing to it.

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Flagstaff Climbing looks to expand

For the better part of the last two decades, the home for Flagstaff climbers has been the indoor gym on South San Francisco Street known as the Vertical Relief Climbing Center

John Doskicz, the owner of the gym that is now called Flagstaff Climbing, worked his way up the walls for years as an employee before purchasing the business in 2001

For the last 2 1/2 years, Doskicz has been working on a plan to expand the business.

His original intent was to add on to the current facility, but the projected construction costs forced him to shelve his city-approved plans.

Doskicz refuses to give up, saying he is now working on Plan B. "We took a week to grieve and then we started looking for an annex facility," he said.

A new, second location would allow Flagstaff Climbing to offer more space to climb, including the ability to expand his current bouldering facilities.

- Joe Ferguson

BETA BOULDERING GYM

495 S. River Run Road, Suite 4,

Flagstaff

(928) 266-0498

Rates: Daily pass: \$14/\$12

adult/child

10-punch pass: \$110

Monthly pass: \$59/\$49 adult/child

Six month pass: \$300/240

adult/child

Daily gear rental: \$7

Hours: Mon-Sat 10 a.m. to 10

p.m.

Sun 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.