

2024 CWA Summit Final Keynotes Announced

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The Climbing Wall Association (CWA) is excited to announce legendary climbers Tommy Caldwell and Alan Watts as the closing keynote speakers at the 2024 CWA Summit.

Caldwell and Watts join previously announced opening keynote speaker Sasha DiGiulian to form a climbing all-star lineup that will share their insights on the business of climbing through a prism of the history of the sport, especially since the first indoor climbing gyms opened in the Pacific Northwest in the late 1980s.

While Caldwell and Watts may be more known for their outdoor climbing pursuits, each played vital roles in the emergence of the indoor climbing industry. Watts was instrumental in producing the first modular holds in the country and co-founded wall manufacturer EP. Caldwell is a part owner of the North American distributor for Edelrid and has taken on the cause of creating more sustainable climbing gear and advocating at the local and national level for environmental protection.



Alan Watts

“Alan Watts and Tommy Caldwell are **two of the best climbers that this sport has ever seen** and they’ve leveraged their skills to bring climbing to a new level in many ways,” says Garnet Moore, CWA Executive Director. “Both have found **new and innovative ways to grow the sport and help make it sustainable, accessible, and profitable**. Their accomplishments are incredible,

Caldwell was called “arguably the best all-around rock climber on the planet” by National Geographic. He completed the first free ascent of The Dawn Wall on El Capitan with Kevin Kevin Jorgeson.

Tommy’s dad taught him to embrace fear and doubt and turn them into inspiration. Given this attitude, Tommy has established some of the hardest routes in the country and free-climbed 12 routes on El Capitan in Yosemite. He believes difficult journeys, with little chance for success, teach him the most. This attitude is no better exemplified than his first free ascent of Dawn Wall in January 2015 and his first ascent of the Fitz Roy Traverse in Patagonia in February 2014.

Watts played a leading role in the birth of sport climbing, transforming Oregon’s Smith Rock into the most influential crag in America during the 1980s. In 1983, Watts

pioneered Watts Tots and Chain Reaction, the first sport routes in the United States, breaking new ground at a time when traditional tactics dominated the sport. His 1985 free ascent of the East Face of Monkey Face (5.13d) was the hardest route in the country.

In the face of intense opposition from traditionalists, Watts fought for the legitimacy of this new style. With an influx of international climbers and several of the world's hardest routes, Smith Rock played a crucial role in the acceptance of sport climbing. Along the way, Alan became one of the first climbers to succeed at the 5.14 level.

Watts will discuss how his role in sport climbing inspired the birth of climbing wall and gym industry in the United States, beginning in the Pacific Northwest. In 1988, he co-founded the US division of wall manufacturer EP, serving as president from 1993 to 1997. He set routes for the inaugural Sport Climbing Championships in Snowbird, Utah, and was one of the first professional climbers in the United States, working with companies such as La Sportiva and Nike.



Tommy Caldwell. Credit: Edelrid

Learn more about Watts and his company dedicated to climbing at Oregon's Smith Rock State Park at <https://www.wattsrocks.xyz/> and learn more about Caldwell's career, exploits, and book "The Push: A Climber's Search for the Path" at <https://www.tommycaldwell.com/>

The 2024 CWA Summit will take place in Portland, Ore. from Wed., May 15 through Fri., May 17, 2024. Pre-conference workshops, featuring certification courses and exclusive professional development workshops, will take place May 13-15. You can view a full breakdown of the schedule, pricing, registrations, book your hotel stay, and learn more at www.cwasummit.org.

More details on the 2024 CWA Summit will be announced in the coming weeks, including information on session speakers, learning tracks, event highlights, new content, and more.

About the 2024 CWA Summit

The CWA Summit is the indoor climbing industry's premier conference strategically designed to provide professional development, networking opportunities, industry-related news, and

inspiration to continue to move the industry forward.

Hosted by the Climbing Wall Association, the 2024 CWA Summit will be hosted in Portland, Ore., at the Oregon Convention Center from May 13-17, 2024. The CWA looks forward to welcoming attendees representing climbing facilities of all sizes, colleges and universities, recreation centers, military installations, top manufacturers, and more. The CWA Summit includes 14 pre-conference workshops and certification events, deep dives into the industry's most important content in education sessions, the best networking experiences, the indoor climbing industry's top trade show, and so much more.

For more information and ongoing updates, visit the CWA Summit Website.

About the CWA

The CWA is a not-for-profit (501c6) industry trade association serving the needs of commercial climbing facility owners and operators, manufacturers of climbing walls and climbing wall equipment, skilled professionals, and other key industry stakeholders. The Climbing Wall Association imagines a world where everyone has access to climbing walls and the work to achieve that mission is rooted in serving those that provide that access.

As the indoor climbing industry grows, the CWA continues to lead in providing the resources necessary to nurture the sport of indoor climbing and industry stakeholders that support its advocacy; the development of industry standards; publication of relevant industry news, data and analysis; facilitating certification and professional development programs; and producing community-building and educational events. The CWA is the industry thought leader of professionalism, legislative action, and healthy growth of the sport of indoor climbing; protecting the interests of all who support the industry.

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