Talk to me about the [purple] route:

Gabriela: Alright? Thank you so much for meeting with me again. -Oh, okay, so yeah, today, we're just gonna be kind of talking about your climbs. We're just gonna talk about this purple one and the blue one,and so really, I guess the first thing I want to know is just looking at this climb. You can zoom out at first, you know. Just talk to me about it when you're looking at it like.

christopher: Yeah. So the the first thing the I do like when I, and looking up at a route. Reading a route like the very first thing I do is try to find rest, which is usually like big holds. Especially for this climb, like you can see, I rest with--- This is like I noticed this--the big, under cling cause that was like before the pocket section which I knew I'm really comfortable in pockets, but it was just like kind of cryptic, like, hard to read. Figure out where to go. So I like plan to rest there before the hard pocket section. I knew I was gonna like, try to get through that quick, And then obviously, I saw this big under cling as well. That was where I decided to rest, which once I got there, it wasn't, It wasn't a rest. It was not that good. Now. The rest of their team. And then I actually do a really, really really bad job of reading the top of Route. I've been trying to work on that. But yeah, I'm like, I've you've done really bad job.

Only reading first 3/4

Gabriela; Say more.

christopher: I don't know. I just feel like for the most part, when I'm at the top of the climb,especially like when you're trying hard or near your limit, then You're really pumped by the time you're at the top, like about 3/4 --- at least, I am any ways, and I feel like a lot of your thoughts go out and you're more like climbing on instinct rather than… um… as slow and steady as you were down the climb earlier. Obviously, that's like different for different climbs.

Gabriela: okay? Yeah. So when you're looking at a route, it feels like you can anticipate, like the first 3 quarters of the route, but then the last quarter. Do you feel like you try to read it. But the plan, the plan just changes. Or is it too much to try to process the entire climb?

christopher: Yeah, like I feel like if I focus on especially, I mean, I think a lot of this comes from competitive climbing, So like, you know, you're you go out there and read the route. You have 6 min to see it, and then you go back into Iso until yeah, you know, go back into Iso and then come out. So a lot of that is like, like for comp routes, especially for like finals routes, ike you don't get to see the route again until you go and climb.

Gabriela: Okay, so how does that impact How you read routes, like?

christopher : So most finals routes are not designed to be topped, so like I've never come close like the closest I've been to topping on Finals route was like 6 moves away from the top. so like, I guess that definitely like makes me not want to focus on the top as much because I'm like, Oh, I don't even think I can get there.

Gabriela: Okay, do you feel like that trickles into the way that you read routes? Okay, do you feel like, if you weren't a Comp. Climber you would probably anticipate the whole climb?

christopher: I don't know. Maybe it's just like how my brain works like, because, like, honestly, I don't. I don't think I do Great at reading routes. I have gotten better.

Gabriela: But you said the other day that you, typically your plan goes exactly according to plan?

Choreography versus improv

christopher: Yeah. Like, if I if I'm like working on a project and like that, blue, everything came out accordingly to plan perfectly. But that's not on the onsight, it's rehearsed. Cause like once I've done the movement, and, you know, felt positions cause like on this purple route, I thought that second under cling was gonna be a really good rest, like super good. And it was really really bad, so like from there, My plans changed because I was like not gonna be able to recover in this undercling as much as I thought I was. But now I need to find positions along the way in these next few moves. Cause like i did have time in that section to like look up you know, figure out my plan from there, and I knew that this section would be, like all the feet out right *points* up there, Which meant I could really get into the like, drop knee position, which I feel super confident in. usually i can get a lot back there which I think definitely helped me in this one.

Gabriela: Why do solid right feet afford you a drop knee?

christopher: Yeah, that that was just had to do with the position of the wall. Cause you are stemming in the dihedral. In the video, we can see where i drop my knee and I use those opportunities to chalk up cause they feel pretty good, it's not too taxing on my right hand.

Gabriela: Okay. So when we're looking at, is there anything else that you want to say about this climb?

christopher: No, I mean I I knew, looking at it, that the the holds got smaller towards the top, and so I kind of knew like that it would be sort of like a sprint to the finish, which for me is what most routes are like.

Gabriela: Okay. So in general, when you looked at this climb. Did you think about it? And like when you're looking at it even now? Are you thinking… Are you breaking it down in your head. Or are you thinking of it more in its totality?

Breaking it down

christopher: Breaking it down

Gabriela: But when you're breaking it down like, are you thinking about it in terms of energy exertion? Are you thinking about it in terms of rest. Are you thinking about it in terms of cruxes? Are you thinking about in terms of all of that?

christopher: I would. Yeah, I'd say it's like a combination of all, because, like sometimes, after a really hard section, I wouldn't call it a rest. But like you're able to get a little bit back, you know. like, if I remember, this was a good hold, and I was able to rest on it kinda…

Gabriela: Can you highlight the cruxes to me on this route?

christopher: I would say. I'll be like at the bottom, *points* at like the start of the crux, was like around here, cause it was a really big move from that under cling, and then just kind of weird. And then like, for a lot of people like this could be really cryptic as well. Just like really sequency, and if you get out of sequence, it's hard to get back into sequence. and just like, you traverss way over like you come out on this wall, and then… like, I would say, these phones were surprisingly good…but not…they still weren't great. They're really shallow. So like, I would say that from here to the undercling was okay. : the crux. And then really, the rest of it was just like beating the pump and getting back as much i can from the rests.

Gabriela: So the next question was kind of like, so would you describe your planning as primarily pre climb or ongoing through your climb

Getting used to the holds

christopher: for me, I'd say it's yeah, during the climb, cause like I said, I'm not. I don't think I'm the best like Route reader. So as far as like sequence goes. I think I am a really good route reader. but as far as like knowing like finding rest and knowing which holds are good and which holds are bad. I don't think I'm good with that, which I think we'll just come with time, as I, you know, climb on more for holds and get accustomed to which holds are which…

Gabriela: So when you're resting like talking to my other participant, he's like when I'm you know, hanging there. I can't really think about the movement ahead of me, because I'm just trying to survive, which I think is very different than the way that we approach climbs, right like when you're on a rest like--

Importance of [good] rest

christopher: that's all, I'm thinking. I'm thinking, when can i get into a drop knee position, And when can I get. you know, into a drop knee position or get anything back that I can….But then also, like also in the back of my mind, I have, like, you know, thinking about. Oh, am I really getting anything out of this rest or is it just making you more pumped? But that's like kinda secondary.

Gabriela: How far ahead Are you looking?

christopher: it depends on how good the rest is and where the clip is. I would say, it really depends on how pumped I am and how good the rest is. But probably typically no more than five to six moves.

Gabriela.: So I heard you say where the clip is, and that's kind of like my first time hearing you even talk about that, because for me, when I'm climbing, I'm climbing like fucking click to click, which I think is what really hurts me as a climber, because I'm just living for the clip, whereas you see, pro climbers they're like, not they skip clips all the time like they're like sub problems are completely different. So like, I'll say, my sub problem is click to click. What is your sub problem?

Sub-problem// how to break down

christopher: I mean, I would say like, rest to rest, okay, some routes have breast, some don't right. So if they don't have a good rest, then i would say crux to crux instead. So like? Usually so like, when i think about a climb---it's like I was resting here right? I knew that like I thought that this section here before it really got into the pockets would be like I'd figured out, so I wasn't really reading that. But I had my eye on…this hold, this pocket right here. And I knew that I needed to have my left hand in that pocket. because, like reading the route beforehand, I knew that I needed to go left hand here and then bump out right and then bump out right again before getting over to the hold on the right side of the wall. And so that's what I was looking at, and I was looking at this hand below it, and like what you know how I just wanted to like Remind myself when I got to that move that my left hand needs to be in that pocket, and I did it on the blue route as well like remembering which hand needs to go it's like, sometimes I'm not even looking at like I'm not focusing on moves, 'm focusing on a hold that you know. Maybe I've read when I was down on the ground, and in the sequence that are at it, you know my right hand doesn't go to that hold., and so I'm just like reminding myself, because the route looks different when you're on it versus when you're down, especially the like as you get higher up. Yeah. So sometimes it's just like reminding myself what specific hand needs to go to a specific hold

Gabriela: so would you say, that's more. Your methodology. Then, like, you're not thinking about the process necessarily, but like more of like a result, like, it sounds, You may not be thinking like how to get there necessarily. But you know that you need to land on that hold with a left hand, and that's more of what you're thinking about rather than how you get there…

christopher: and you know, some of that will be you know looking at holds that are two or three holds ahead of me. If they are good holds and they aren't in bad positions, I just trust that I will get through that. Especially if i am not tired and it is the first crux of the climb

What about your feet?

Gabriela: Do you ever think about like what, What foot goes where? Because we're talking a lot about hands right?

christopher: Right. I don't actually. That is actually something I have been trying to work on. Like I usually only read routes with the hand hand holds . Sometimes you can like it's easiest spot like is like a solid heel hook or something like that. I can read that, but as far as like just move to move, I don't really think about it. In the cruxes I do, especially when it comes to clipping stances, : because, like sometimes, there's there's clips where you have to like, really pull in with your right foot or something, but those are a lot more taxing on me. And so sometimes like figuring out a different foot option for my left foot. But that is usually only in the crux sequence. I trust myself that in the moves that are out of the crux sequence, I can find a comfortable position to clip when I am there.

Gabriela: So like, I feel like, if if I were you, I would be like when I'm reading a route I'd be like, Okay, which, like,, okay, which right foot is gonna fuck with me?

christopher. Yeah, I mean, i knew, like the dihedral route, I knew--- any dihedral or any arete or any sorts makes it more difficult to utilize my prosthetic, so this one specifically in the crux section with the pockets, i did notice that there were no right feet… It just means like I was gonna have to pull harder or get like a really high left foot somewhere that is unorthodox, or just be forced to trust my right foot, and that is something I can't really know until I am in the moment in the position.

Gabriela: So like are your cruxes informed by the fact that you have a prosthetic. Or is that kind of like, you're not thinking about that anymore.

Able bodied with some adaptations

christopher: No, Obviously, there's exceptions. But my crux in a climb is typically the same as an able bodied climber. like there's definitely exceptions like the that black route that goes up the arete. It has a weird clip that no body struggles with… But I just like simply can't get my right up and toe down. I fell there two or three times before I had to clip. So yeah, I feel like I climb like an able bodied climber, i mean obviously there is adapations I have developed because I am an amputee, like now I think about it a lot because I drop knee a lot on the left side. Part of that… It's a position that feels comfortable for me, because most of my weight is on my non prosthetic side. So if i was not an amputee, I Would not have hip mobility or hip flexion that I do. But for me when I see an able-bodied person do a climb around my grade range, like I think I can do it with some obvious exceptions. When I see someone on a 13a, I know I can do it the same way.

Gabriela. So, Rests, cruxes, weird right feet, and…?

christopher: I would say I always look at the very top hold... And I think it's just cause I did that so many times it mesa where I got to the top and I fell off

Gabriela: okay, for this climb. Specifically, is there anything that this climb like taught you that you would apply to shape another planning approach for a climb.

christopher: Yeah, I was really surprised at how many micro rests I was able to get in that top section. So many drop knees! But when I was able to find those positions in the blue route I did after this, and get some back in those positions that were similar. Yeah, so I think it definitely did.

Let’s talk about the blue route

Gabriela:. Let's talk about the blue Route!

christopher: yeah so this one, I mean my approach to reading it was a little different because I have climbed it three or four times before. Hadn't sent it yet. But I haven't. I honestly haven't really been close: like I had gotten before I had gotten to here before falling which was obviously still like, don't know 10 min from the top. But i had done all of the moves, so i knew where my cruxes would be beforehand. I knew that this bottom section was easy, other than this big move here. You have to get a super high left foot which is kinda scary. Then I clip here, rest here on this undercling, because as you know obviously, here, here, and here is super hard. You can get only get back a little here in this pocket, but only with your left hand cause you can’t match on it.

So I fall at this first move in the pinches, like, probably like a little less than half the time. so like, because I've done the move 3 or 4 times. I also knew that it was just commitment thing that I just have to commit to it and the hold is good. So yeah, I mean, that's the hardest move on the route for me. But it's just a commitment thing. And then I knew that I'm able to get, Once I get to this tiny little hold here. : like, it's a really, it's a really hard lock off move. But once I'm able to get there and get my feet up. I am able to get a little bit back, cause there's that hold there, another one there, so you can like here. That's like your first rest after the crux , I guess.

so this is where I was telling you about like decisions I remember. I remember that I needed to go here with my right hand, i did get it in there eventually.

Gabriela: But there were some shenanigans in the process

christopher: So yeah, so because I have a prosthetic, I am not able to pull my hip in here, and so because i canot do that, instead of bumping-- most people go right hand here, left hand on weird thumb catch, and pull with their right leg-- I have to completely instead crank on this tiny foot, cross, and weird match, but because I have done it before, I know that I can do it.

Gabriela: oh, whoaaa so your shenanigans were on purpose!?

christopher: yeah! and that's it's really, it's just like a tension thing when I'm in. Because, like, I'm left hand here, kind of here. And so it's just a tension thing, and I just have to like, trust my feet : and get established and then get my weight back over my left hand, and then, like piano key, yeah. And then, from there, again I told you this before I climbed it. I had made a recent change in my beta for this section. But that was only because I had done it before. Before I knew that it felt good to go right here then cross, but once I get to this good hold, i knew because I climbed it the day before, I just needed my right hand. and so when I was resting here, I knew I was like focusing on this. the bottom crimp on the volume and need that need to go right into that before going out left … So that's what I was focusing on there. and that was the first time that I had done it that way in sequence. And it felt super good. I also knew this was super good rest, so i just sprinted from here to here. And then once I got

there, I was like pretty like I knew there were some really difficult moves to come, but I knew that I have done all those top moves while really pumped. It's like once I got there, I was pretty confident that I was going to get it. And yeah, the rest of it was just like sprint to the finish and get as much back as you can.I didn't remember the last move series though

Gabriela:I know you climbed this one before, but was there a specific hold or move that like surprised you. It sounds like this sequence kind of did a little bit

christopher: like, I hadn't actually even tried it that way. This was my first time. But when i got that right hand crip, i could get my feet up. I was also super surprised by how good my pogo was!

Gabriela: So how did you adapt in response to those like, you're like, Okay, that felt really good like. How did that help you in the rest of the climb?

christopher: Well, honestly, I didn't think I was gonna get the climb, But then once I got that hold I felt really good, and then I like kind of slowed down. Was like, damn like this bottom section felt really good like, I didn't really think about how easy this felt on the send go until I was like above it. Maybe I can send it. Yeah, I think it definitely like the way you climb the route, like, say, I'm resting halfway up the route, like, of I climb the bottom part of that route really poorly like, it's gonna affect my mentality going to the top of the climb as well.

Instinct

Gabriela: do you think that with this route, it was like, pre planned, or were there some moments of planning as you were climbing as well?

christopher: I would say everything went according to plan. Really everything was planned. I did make a split moment decision in this weird section where I changed my beta because I knew where i needed my hands needed to be but I did not know how to get there.

I cant even tell you how I did it, it was just instinct. I know my body feels so good with a left drop knee position with my left hip into the wall. It makes me wonder able bodied climbers have the safe space, safe move on the wall.

Gabriela.: But that's a really good question to ask climbers. What's your safe position where you can reset? Yeah..: And that's like your space for recovery, for resetting, or like, you've okay, do you feel like your rest are like for mental recovery as well?

Why rest?

christopher:I really struggle with like my breathing, especially like in the competitive setting. Chris, our coach and I have been like really working on and training for the season. Because, like sometimes I, it's like., don't freeze, coming out of a crux and being like, super out of breath for no reason. And so, yeah, I think, in rests, like I wouldn't say mental recovery. But like, calming my nerves back down…

Gabriela: is your priority like nervous system regulation, or like physical like recovery.

christopher: would say, my priority is physical, But like I would not be resting if I wasn't pumped. The main focus is definitely 100 percent physical. While I am there, I am working on my breathing.

Gabriela: what are your like emotions when you're like leading a route like? Do you feel scared? Do you feel appy like? Are you feeling stoked like nervous?

What are your emotions like when you climb?

christopher: No, I just feel like so in the moment, which is the appeal of climbing when I first started. No matter what is going on in my day to day life, when I am climbing that is all I am focused on, Like I am so dialed. Like I think somebody would be lying if they said they never feel fear when they lead, because, like there's definitely times where I do feel fear and like some days more than others, for some reason. but no, I wouldn't say. That's like something i am really thinking about. Really, I just feel present in the moment.

What did you learn from the blue climb?

christopher: my biggest takeaway from this one? I guess it really showed like where my endurance is at, and then, like I can, I can trust my endurance more than my power. I knew that if I just like worked through the positions and figured it out and got my feet in the right position that I could do it. I didn't rush, I took my time and trusted my endurance.

Always a solution?

Gabriela: like you made a comment when we last met, and you were saying, like, I know, there's always a solution like to everything that I do. And I'm wondering: How does that inform your climbing.
or just like you're climbing. And then, like the way that you approach life in general

christopher.: well, well in my head, I'm like, especially with like routes in the gym, And obviously there's like limitations to this. But in my head, like, if I'm climbing a route, that's you know, close to my grade range, like in my head. I'm like somebody else, like another human had to set it so like if they can do it, i know that I can do it. . Maybe I do have to get stronger. But, like I genuinely don't think that there's like, I don't know if this is like bad to convince myself of this or something like, I really don't think there's a move in this gym that I can't do. And I got convinced myself about this.

Gabriela: and so then how does that inform the way you climb?

christopher:I mean, it forces me to like: like slow down and like feel the move, because, like there's there's obviously some moves that are like, still, really far like that, That pinch move the very first time I did it, like tried to go slow, and just like, did it really weird? And I was like, this feels impossible. I like was blaming my leg. And I was like, Oh, there's a really high right foot? But it's like I just like, can't do it!
<u>But There's ways around everything</u> like : if there's a move it's too hard for me to do because of my right foot So maybe I just have to do it differently, like maybe I do have to pull a lot harder. But there's a way around it.
I used to, at the start, three months after my amputations, there was so much shit going on my head about my amputation. I used to blame my foot all the time, but I don't any more.

Gabriela: How does that approach the way that, like you move through the world in general? Always thinking there is a solution? and like, maybe, how you'll like approach a math problem.

christopher: I dont know, i would say, That goes with a lot of things in life like just because I did bad on my anatomy exam doesn't mean that, you know. I won't pass the class. I will still get into grad school. I mean, even I fail the class, there's ways around it, I can just take an anatomy class somewhere else. And I guess, just known that there's always solutions to your problems. <u>The problems that we do have in our day to day life just aren't that significant.</u>

Gabriela: So how do you think that informs problem-solving in math?

In math there always one single anwer

christopher: So like, my mom's a math teacher. Okay? So my parents instilled in is from a very young age, especially in sports, dont quit, if you start. I played soccer for a while and didn't like it like they made me finish out the season. they instilled that in us in every aspect of our lives. Not just sports. Um, she was a math teacher, which i think is interesting.

Gabriela: So why do you think it's interesting that she's a math teacher like? Do you think there's something in the culture of math that's grounded in this idea of don't quit.

christopher: Yeah, cause I feel like, no matter like how long a super long algebra takes, even if its 4 pages, you make mistakes, you figure out what went wrong, you will get the answer eventually.

Gabriela: Is that applicable to other domains? What makes that unique about math?

christopher: think it's because there's a specific answer. whereas, like other, other areas of studies there can be multiple different answers, and that can be overwhelming.

Gabriela: so, like, is it more overwhelming. If there's a lot of different solution paths to like, think about all the different ways you could get there versus, there's one solution. So maybe it's this, or maybe it's this or this or this. But you're going to 1 point rather than branching out in every possible direction to all the different answers.

christopher: yes, and like, I have like, kind of like a one track mind. Focusing on one solution path is easier for me.

math//climbing?

Gabriela: cause like, in climbing, we have this initial path. Right? We have this initial problem. Yeah, it's the same in math, like, we're thinking or in climbing right? That's a parallel that I've drawn between climbing and math is inherently. Why, why am I doing my dissertation on this? Why, how are they so inherently similar? You have some starting conditions and some variables and all that good shit just like you're starting holds and you have an end goal. Maybe you do a right heel hook here, whatever, but at the end of the day…. Your path is somewhat laid out for you. even if you have to adapt along the way. Do you resonate with that? Is there anything you want to add to that?

christopher: 100 percent.I don't know if I'm adding anything. It's more just like reiterating What you said. You give two different people the same problem. They might do it completely different ways (with the right steps), but arrive to the same answer in math. In climbing, two different climbers can move through completely different sequences along the way, but still get to the top

Success in climbing?

Gabriela: How do you define success in climbing?

christopher: like my relationship with climbing is unique for me. So i never have done a sport--- i wrestled my whole life, and yes, I enjoyed it, but i really only did it cause i was good at it and did it for so long, and like tennis and other sports were just fin-- but i have never done a sport like climbing where it knocks out both of those for me. When I am climbing in a competition, my ultimate measure of success is getting first place ya know.But then, like I also just like really love climbing and enjoy climbing and like sometimes there's some sessions where I have, you know, training in mind. And so, like, you know, maybe it's working on a project. and, like the the goal of that day is to send the project.. But then other days is like, if I'm feeling kind of burn out on training and just like, Hey, like, let's just go climb for fun like. Try any boulders and have fun with it. So different avenues or systems of achievement.