

On August 9th – 11th, Josh Hodson of Bettendorf and Ashley Whittlesey of Cedar Rapids joined 90 other arbor-athletes from all over the world to compete in the 2019 International Tree Climbing Championship (ITCC) in Knoxville, Tennessee. Each chapter sends its top male and female competitor to the International competition. As the highest male and female scorers in the Iowa Chapter (IAA) competition held last May, Josh and Ashley proudly represented us at the Knoxville event.

This was Josh's 2nd International competition and Ashley's first. While neither athlete won the competition, they both performed respectably and made us proud.

There are plenty of misconceptions about ITCC, so I asked Josh and Ashley a couple of stupid questions to liven things up a bit.

SC: So, is ITCC just a contest to see who can get to the top of a tree the fastest? Or is it like the lumberjack contests we see on TV?

JH: I get that question from time to time. It's not just a competition to see who can get up there the fastest. It's similar to the lumberjack competition in that there are multiple events, but that's where the similarities end. It's more of a rock-climbing style of tree climbing competition. We are not climbing poles. We are not using axes.

AW: Well, I guess it is kind of like a contest to see who can get to the top of a tree the fastest, but it requires a little more skill, knowledge of knots, rope techniques and gear.

SC: Safety is not a big consideration at this event, is it?

JH: You bone head! Safety is the #1 overall consideration at all TCC's.

AW: It's a huge consideration! Everyone must be safe and aware of their surroundings for their sake and the people around them during the competition.

SC: Are chainsaws used in the ITCC?

JH: We do not use chainsaws. During event setup it's possible that chainsaws are used to remove hazardous limbs but during competition, no. It's a competition to demonstrate the overall ability of a climber to navigate through a tree.

AW: No. Just strictly climbing, skill and gear.

SC: Any discouraging words for your fellow climbers considering competing?

JH: No. After 10 years of competing, I have yet to see any discouragement. One of the best things about these competitions is everyone's willingness to share, help and improve each other's skill set.

AW: No. I always try to help, and I hope everybody does the same for me.

SC: Any insults for this year's ITCC winners Scott Forrest (New Zealand Chapter) and Josephine Hedger (United Kingdom + Ireland Chapter)?

JH: Absolutely not. This year's winners are both multi-year winners that always show up prepared and ready with an extraordinary amount of knowledge that they are always willing to share. Once again, a big congratulations to Scott and Josephine!

AW: No! I have nothing but good praises for this year's winners. They work hard and train hard. I have nothing but good things to say.

The IAA will be holding our 2020 TCC on May 14th – 16th in Mason City. We are always looking for competitors, volunteers and spectators. We will post further details here as they are solidified. Maybe you can represent IAA at the International competition next year and I will subject you to some ridiculous questions. Also, check <http://www.iowaarboristassociation.org/> regularly for details and lots of other tree related stuff.