

*Chilean Patagonia, Various Ascents.* Michael Pennings, Scott Lazar, and Cameron Tague reached the south summit of Torre Norte via a variation of *La Ultima Esperanza* on January 13, 1996. Our route was 1,500 feet, eight pitches, and 5.11 A1. On January 16, Lazar, Tague, and a young Chilean climber named Cristian Oyarzo began work on *Via de Las Mammass* on Torre Central. We climbed clean hand and finger cracks free with intermittent aid. In two days we had half the route fixed. We retreated to our hut in Camp Torres and waited for a window of weather to attempt the summit. On January 24, Pennings, Lazar, and Tague reached the summit of Torre Central, descending in full winter conditions to complete a 19-hour day. On January 31, Pennings and Felicia Ennis\* climbed Torre Sur via the difficult *Aste* route in an outstanding 28 hours round trip. Two days later, Lazar, Tague and Chilean Andreas Zegers repeated the same route in 31 hours.

On February 1, we moved our base of operations to the Pingo Valley, which is located between the Rio Ascencio and the Rio de Frances. Upon our arrival in the Paine a month previously, we had been captivated by our first views up into the Pingo. After extensive journal surfing, we knew of but a single route established in this untapped valley. A team of Welsh climbers had completed *Fist Full of Dollars* on the east face of Cuerno Norte during the previous season. We were intrigued, and were curious to take a closer look at the potential.

Initially, we established camp high in the valley, close to the base of the walls. After a week of being battered by the wind, we moved camp down below tree line. Three weeks of waiting passed; our patience and resources were nearing exhaustion. On February 28, three days before our planned departure date, the weather changed, and we were surprised by the return of sunny



Above: the uncrowded Pingo Valley. Most of the peaks pictured are unclimbed.  
Right: Cameron Tague, awash in Nuggetive Energy. Michael Pennings



skies. Unaccustomed to the alpine starts after a long sedentary month, Pennings and Tague reached the base of the 500-meter east face of Cuerno Este in the early afternoon. Six pitches of fantastic free climbing, interspersed with a few moves of aid, brought us to within 50 feet of the horrendously rotten and overhanging sedimentary rock that overlies the granite. We dubbed our new route *Vuelo del Condor* (IV 5.11 A1) and rappelled the route.

Two days later, we awoke to clear, windless skies once again. We departed camp at 3:30 a.m. and arrived at the base of the east face of La Hoja three hours later. Our intended route followed a single crack system for 700 meters, and looked to be choice free-climbing. Feeling confident we could get by without, we left our hammers, pitons, and bolts back in camp. We fuckin' went sick! We got jams, we fuckin' pulled on 'em. Fingies, stemmin', the whole goddam bit. Pitches three and four!!! Jesus, fuckin', YIKES. Glad I was holdin' the other end of the rope on that shit. The Nuggetive Energy! Do you want to talk about GOOD. Oops—I got a little excited. The result of one day's work and one month's waiting was the best alpine rock climbing either of us have done. Our route was christened *Anduril* (IV 5.11 A1), with a short section of aid that could be eliminated if it is not snowing on you. Check it out, it's worth the wait.

MICHAEL PENNINGS and CAMERON TAGUE, *Uncoordinated*

\*Perhaps the first female ascent of the Torre Sur. Reports of an Italian woman climbing Torre Sur in 1985 are unconfirmed.

*Cuerno Principale, East Face.* It was reported that a team of young Germans from Neu Elm climbed the previously unattempted east face of Cuerno Principale (2450 m) above the Pingo Valley. Rockfall down the center of the wall forced the team to the left edge of the face, where they followed a series of cracks for 18 pitches, eventually joining the upper section of the south ridge route that was climbed as the first ascent of the peak. Their nearly 650-meter route was given a grade of VII+ A3; the team reported the climbing to be superb and the atmosphere wild and remote compared to the commonly climbed Torres. (*High Mountain Sports* 164)

*La Hoja, East Face, New Route.* In the Pingo valley, the Chilean team of Christian Oberli and Sven Bruchfeld established a new route on the east face of La Hoja in January, 1996. The route, which was done in "classic style" with fixed ropes, was 14 pitches, 400 meters, and went at 5.10a A1. The pair was forced to pay U.S. \$300 in climbing fees.

PABLO BESSER J., *Club Alemàn Andino*

*Cerro Cota 2000, The Keyhole Route (a.k.a. Eli's Wet Dream).* On December 20, 1996, Eli Helmuth, Gardner Heaton and I arrived in the Valle Francaise of Parque Nacional Torres Del Paine in southern Chile. Cerro Cota 2000 is visible through the beech trees that provided shelter for our base camp at Campo Britanico. Following the usual load carrying in poor weather we climbed our first pitch on December 27. Over the following two weeks we were only able to fix three more pitches over two independent days of favorable weather. Those four rope lengths contained the difficult aid and all of the 18 holes that we drilled on the route.

Camp I was established under a roof 700 feet up. Gardner and I committed to the route on a clear January 16. Eli had run out of time a week earlier and had to leave to fulfill a guiding commitment. It took three days to fix the five pitches that brought us to the name-sake and the most