

mit to base, including manky bolts. We expected to find some weird stuff, but we had no idea that at the end of the day we would have a two-gallon motor oil container, an old portaledge, seven belay seats and a large boom box! We also replaced every remaining quarter-inch bolt and dowel on the route, leaving *Lurking Fear* with the most bomber bolts of any El Cap route.

In April, the ASCA broadened its efforts to Indian Creek, Utah. John Wason led the effort to replace most of the popular climbs on the Super Crack Buttress and Battle of the Bulge Buttress, and in Donnelly Canyon. In addition to replacing terrifying anchor bolts (John pulled one out with his fingers!), unsightly clusters of bleached webbing were removed and replaced with camouflaged chains. The project was funded with money raised by John and Patagonia at the Phoenix Bouldering Contest and with gear donations from Metolius, Petzl and Fixe.

The ASCA also replaced anchors in Zion, Utah, where Jason Stevens organized the replacement of crucial anchors and bolt ladders on the classics *Spaceshot* and *Prodigal Son*.

Leading members of the industry that provided help included Black Diamond, Blue Water, *Climbing* magazine, Fixe Hardware, Hurricane Mountain Works, Kinnaloo, Leeper, Metolius, Misty Mountain, MK Productions, New England Ropes, Patagonia, Petzl, *Rock and Ice*, The North Face and Touchstone Climbing. For this year, our goal is to replace 2,000 bolts in Yosemite, Zion, Indian Creek and the Calaveras area, among others. Anybody willing to help in the effort or wanting to learn more about the ASCA can check out our web site, <www.safeclimbing.org>, or contact us at 1622 Hopkins St./Berkeley, CA 94707. Phone: (510) 558-6919; Fax: (415) 389-8595.

CHRIS MCNAMARA

Yosemite Valley

Yosemite Valley, Various Activity. Dean Potter, in outlandishly bold style, made a new solo speed record of the Regular route on Half Dome. Taking only 4:17 (and smashing the old record by 16 hours), Potter free-soloed most of the route, carrying a rarely-used rope on his back most of the way. It was perhaps Potter's fifth time up the route that summer, and he said he had things fairly wired. Indeed, with Venezuelan José Pereyra, he broke the duo record on Half Dome later in the season, coming in at 2:54. Two other records that fell to this pair were the *Salathé* in 7:33 and *Lurking Fear* in 7:15. They also pioneered a new technique to enable the pair to climb together with relative safety. It involved putting the rope through a Ropeman (a tiny jumar), so that if the second fell, he would not pull the leader off—very ingenious. These three records were set during a five-day span in September. The pair also made a new record on *Half Dome Direct* (8:20). Potter also free-soloed Royal Arches in 57 minutes car-to-car.

Alex and Thomas Huber were also in the Valley to do some long free climbing. The pair have each freed the *Salathé Wall*. This time they headed to the east side of El Cap. Working off the Footstool, they freed some existing pitches on *Continental Drift* that were among the hardest yet on El Capitan. This gained them access to the upper *North American Wall*, which they more or less followed to the top. The Black Cave came as another crux at 5.13b, protected by a short sawed-off angle. *El Niño* (5.13c A0) has only 30 feet of aid (a blank section above Big Sur) on the entire route, and took the Hubers only three weeks to complete. Alex also added a variation to the *Free Salathé*. *Free Rider* avoids the lower 5.13 crux used by

Skinner-Piana in 1988, and avoids the headwall with a detour to *Excalibur* to produce a route that is a mere 5.12d. The pair redpointed the route with both climbers free climbing each pitch in under 16 hours, the fastest free ascent of El Capitan. (For a complete account of the Hubers' efforts, see the article at the beginning of this journal.) *El Niño* was soon repeated by the young British team of Leo Houlding and Patrick Hammond. (See below.)

Local Valley climber Scott Burke, in a monumental effort that required 261 days spread out over three years, became the second person, and first male, to free climb every pitch of the *Nose*. Previously, only Lynn Hill had free climbed the route. While Scott managed to redpoint the second crux pitch (the "Changing Corners" or "Houdini" pitch), he had to be content (for the time being) with a top rope ascent of the Great Roof during a ground-up ascent of the climb in November. On the Great Roof, he decided to take the top rope ascent as good since a storm was reportedly on the way. Scott did not lead every pitch of the *Nose*, but did free every pitch. He plans to return next year to properly lead every hard section. He feels the Great Roof warrants a rating of 5.14a. Although Lynn Hill rated this pitch 5.13, others who have checked out the moves, such as Yuji Hirayama, have offered a 13d/14a rating for those of normal finger stature as well.

Warren Hollinger was responsible for three new El Cap routes over the summer. With Bryan Law, he established *Ned's Excellent Adventure*. (See below.) *Disorderly Conduct* (VI 5.9 A3±), put up with Miles Smart and Bart Groendycke, shares some pitches with *New Dawn* before breaking out left of *Genesis* above Boot Flake. A second ascent was made one month later by Eric George, Brent Ware, with Eric Coomer. Another route, *Nightmare on California Street* (VI 5.10 A4+), was put up by Hollinger and Grant Gardner between *Sea of Dreams* and *Wyoming Sheep Ranch* in July. It featured a 63-hole count. The topo stresses that a 65-meter rope is mandatory.

The *El Cap Girdle Traverse* (VI 5.10 A4) was finally climbed by Chris McNamara and Mark Melvin. McNamara's intimate knowledge of the rock made this oft-tried adventure possible in only five days, with two separate returns to the ground for a night out at the salad bar. It is 75 pitches long and features some classic climbing on the *Zodiac* and *Salathé*.

On the speed climbing scene, several records were again established. Brian McCray and Miles Smart climbed *Aurora* in 23:55 in an incredibly fast on-sight in August. However, the pair rested on top for half an hour before hauling up their bag, which must be added to their time. (The route's not over till the bags are hauled, the last pitch is hauled, and everyone is on top.) McCray teamed up with his wife, Roxanna Brock, for the fastest female-male time of *Eagle's Way* in 19:06, the third-fastest time overall. Hans Florine, Brian McCray, and Wayne Willoughby made the fastest ascent of the *Bad Seed* to date. They took only 19:12 to dispatch this route, which is the first one-day ascent of El Capitan by a disabled person (Wayne Willoughby suffers from post-polio syndrome).

Venezuelan José Pereyra and Russ Mitrovich climbed the *Zodiac* in 8:40; the previous record was 10:57. The same pair also teamed up with Potter to make the first one-day ascent

RIGHT: *El Capitan*, showing routes established in 1998. A: Girdle Traverse (McNamara-Melvin); B: Disorderly Conduct (Hollinger-Groendycke-Smart); C: Nightmare on California Street (approximate) (Gardner-Hollinger); D: El Niño (Huber-Huber); E: Continental Drift (Anker-Thaw, 1997); F: Heavy Metal and Tinker Toys (Ayad-Bridwell-Hausoefter); G: Ned's Excellent Adventure (Hollinger-Law). Not shown: Highway to Hell (Berecz-Tivadar) (near Iron Hawk, joins Atlantic Ocean Wall near its belay #11). THOMAS EVANS



A

B

C

D

E

F

G

of *Mescalito* in 23:28, breaking the existing record by over four hours. Hans Florine and Nancy Feagin became the first male-female team to climb El Capitan (the *Nose*) and Half Dome (Regular Route) in a day, and sixth overall. Willie Benegas (Argentina), Steve Schneider, and Andreas Zegers (Chili) made a record 39:37 ascent of *Excalibur*. The *Reticent Wall* saw several repeats, most notably its first solo by Grant Gardner on only his fifth El Cap route, and also by Wally Barker. Barker, as well as Brian McCray, soloed *Surgeon General*. Chris McNamara made a record 13:13 solo ascent of *Lurking Fear*.

STEVE SCHNEIDER

El Capitan, El Niño, Second Ascent. In the meadow, on a clear fresh October afternoon, Patrick "Patch" Hammond and I reclined in our hammocks of smoke and alcohol, eagerly scoping the east buttress of El Capitan with the Huber brothers and their binoculars. I'd spent six weeks on the Valley floor waiting for this: the moment I became completely focused on one goal, psyched for the thin line of slabs, ledges, corners, and roofs that is *El Niño*.

Based on advice from many Yosemite locals, we decided there would be a storm before the end of October. It was already the last week of the month. In an uncharacteristically rational decision, we concluded we would not go on the wall without synthetic sleeping bags, a haul sack and a portaledge with an expedition fly. (We weren't willing to pay a \$15,000 rescue fine.)

That very evening in the bar, Kevin Thaw introduced us to Conrad Anker. Over a pitcher of conversation, they sorted us out all the kit we needed. We covered the beer. Later, Kevin, Conrad, Patch and I, accompanied by Dean Potter and José Pereya, bouldered around Camp 4, where we finalized our "big wall philosophy" and, with the others' help, established our plan of attack for *El Niño*.

Our philosophy, which we developed whilst toying with the Hubers' stagnant, Bavarian sense of humor, and playing with possibilities of jumping problems on the boulders that surrounded us, was simple:

"Big walling is easy! We'll take climbing gear, camping gear (of vertical context) and shitloads of water."

The plan of attack was no more complicated:

"To the Big Sur big-wall style. Onsite. Ditch stuff. From Big Sur, one push to summit. Onsite."

With an absolute minimum of effort we placed ourselves, fully equipped, on the top of the Footstool at the base of the route. My father happened to be in the Valley at the time. He helped us grunt loads up the talus field, and he too stood with us on our little stool in this, a really special moment of great anticipation and excitement.

First day, first pitch: the climbing's like slate. Balancey, small holds, technical. I'm pulling hard, starting to sketch wildly, my foot slips....

Having described it all a thousand times, the ins and outs of every move on every pitch now seem rather trivial. What is important for the record is: I grabbed a quickdraw on the first pitch (5.13b), narrowly avoiding a 70-foot fall. I sent it first redpoint. I pulled on the first bolt on the second pitch to check and chalk the holds. Sent it first go. I onsighted the rest of the 5.13 pitches, along with all the other pitches (half of which I led), placing all my gear. I ended all of Patch's pitches clean. Patch did not climb all the hard pitches.

Patch and I are both talented slab climbers. After flying success on the first three pitches,