

CALIFORNIA, Yosemite Valley

Activity in Yosemite Valley. The most brilliant effort of 1995 was Alex Huber's second all-free ascent of the Salathé Wall. Accompanied by Austrian Heinz Zak, Huber redpointed every pitch without preplaced gear, which must surely rank with Lynn Hill's *Nose-in-a-day*, all-free effort of 1994 for most determined effort award. It had been seven years since Todd Skinner and Paul Piana first free climbed the route, although several strong teams have attempted to repeat their effort. Huber, a limestone face climbing expert, spent two months in the Valley, mounting a crash course in crack climbing. Unlike the Skinner/Piana team who had swapped leads on the crux pitches while the follower jumared, Huber climbed every inch of the route, and encompassed two variations of his own on pitches 19 and 24. The first variation involved avoiding the 5.13 fist pitch by escaping to the 200-foot off-width of *Bermuda Dunes*, which Skinner had deemed "horrific." (*An account of Alex Huber's ascent appears earlier in this journal — Ed.*)

Some notable repeats of desperate El Capitan routes were made during 1995. Kevin Thaw and Tim Wagner made the third ascent of *The Gulf Stream* (VI 5.10 A4), reporting a lot of wild hooking. *The Sea of Dreams* (VI 5.9 A5), still regarded as one of the hardest outings on the Big Stone, received three ascents last year. The teams were Wagner/Cameron Lawson, Calder Stratford/Brad Bond and Kevin Thaw/Dale Bard (it was Bard's first outing on El Capitan in about 10 years. Bard is in third place in the race to climb El Capitan the most times. Steve Gerberding is first, followed by Mike Corbett). *Kaos* (VI 5.7 A4) received a third ascent by Sean Easton and partner.

Several record-breaking speed ascents were made in 1995. In August, Peter Coward, Hans Florine, and Steve Schneider pumped up *Son of Heart* (VI 5.10 A3+) in 29:24. With Mark Deger and Kevin Thaw, Schneider snuck into the park during the government shutdown and galloped up *The Horse Chute* (VI 5.9 A3) in 27:07. Florine signed on with Coward to climb the *Zodiac* (VI 5.11 A3+) in 10:57, shattering the old mark of 14:53. Florine also soloed the West Face of Leaning Tower in 5:56, nearly halving the old record. The "Dream Team" of Dave Bengston, Steve Gerberding and Scott Stowe was also active, warming up on *The Shortest Straw* (VI 5.10 A3+) in 23:43. The trio then made a stunning single-push ascent of the *Pacific Ocean Wall* (VI 5.9 A4) in 36:24 last September, likely the longest hard route ever done in this manner. They followed up with a 19:58 ascent of *The Bad Seed* (VI 5.9 A4+) in October. *The Prow* received a record solo by Andy Puhvel in nine hours even.

Other notable speed ascents, although not records, were Bengston, Stowe, and Brian Guizot's ascent of *The Dihedral Wall* (VI 5.9 A3+) in just over 29 hours, finishing on the West Buttress. Peter Coward and Joe Terrevechia made the second fastest time on *Lurking Fear* (VI 5.10 A3+) in

June. Later in June, they became the third team ever to climb El Capitan (*The Nose*) and Half Dome (Regular Northwest Face) in under 24 hours, making the linkup in 23:27. Mike Carville and Florine climbed *The Shield* (VI 5.9 A3+) last August in 18:25, just missing the existing record by five minutes.

On the new route scene, the North Face of Lower Cathedral Rock has seen a flurry of activity. A dozen steep, and slab, sport routes have gone up. Scott Burk's *Counterparts* (5.13c), a five-pitch climb, hails as the most difficult route in this area known as "Mecca." Other classics such as *Peasants* (5.11a), *The King and I* (5.11d), and *Empire* (5.13a) have also been established by first ascent parties such as Al Swanson, Steve Gerberding, and Cade Lloyd

On Sentinel Rock, Scott Cosgrove and Bob Gaines established *How the West Was Won* (V 5.12b), an all-free route that climbs the old Robbins solo classic *In Cold Blood* (V 5.8 A4). The climbing varies from side pull/underclimbing sequences to "a smooth ass-kicking off-width," and was climbed in June. On the Middle Cathedral Perry Beckham and Steve Sutton put up *The Grand Wazoo*, a five-pitch 5.11+ route that begins after the second pitch of the *Birchhoff-Williams*.

In Tuolumne Meadows, a stagnation of difficult new routes was broken by Ron Kauk, who added three new 5.13s to the area's new total of 17. *Broken Arrow* (5.13b) is a thin crack near Olmstead Point. On Medlicott, Kauk rap-bolted a long-standing ground-up project of John Bachar's, producing *Peace* (5.13c). When asked about taking over the route from rival Bachar, Kauk responded that he merely wanted to climb the route. Bachar had been projecting on the route for over seven years.

STEVE SCHNEIDER

El Capitan, New Route. It was reported that Steve Gerberding, Scott Stowe and Lori Reddle put up a new A5 route on El Capitan in November. The route climbs 14 pitches from Lay Lady Lay Ledge to the rim. The route took 10 days and features a crux pitch involving extensive hooking, Bird Beaks, and two copperheads. (*Rock and Ice* 72)

El Capitan, Cleanup of the Nose. The Conservation Committee of the AAC provided a generous grant to a group of climbers from Prescott College in Arizona to clean the Nose Route of El Capitan and to educate climbers about conservation ethics on the big walls. The team was coordinated by AAC member Eve Tallman and included six Prescott students (Eric Adolphi, AAC member Matt Menard, Amos Whiting, Mike Ho, Steve Crillo, and Josh Cross), Yosemite climbers Christopher Trudeau and Constantine Severls, and climbing photographer Bill Hatcher, who provided photos and a press release to several international climbing magazines. Some of the team mem-