

Face to the left of the 1986 Italian Route on the Southeast Pillar, reaching the summit on February 22. The route, *Bagual Bigwall*, was given a grade of VII+/VIII- A3+. The team rappelled the route, leaving the belay anchors in place. (*High Mountain Sports* 154)

*Fitz Roy, Royal Flush.* The climb was done in January/February. I was accompanied by German climbers Bernd Arnold, Jorg Gershel and Lutz Richter. We saw this unique line on the east pillar (1300-1400 meters) when we tried *El Corazon* in December 1993. The line was very inspiring and challenging, so we returned to Fitz Roy one year later. Our goal was to set up a decent route with comfortable belays and protection that makes free climbing in good conditions enjoyable. Many of the best lines in the world don't get repeated because of bad or no protection. But still, climbing in Patagonia is very adventurous. It seems like gambling; as in a poker game, one needs a lot of luck and has to take some risks and invest big efforts to succeed. Therefore our name, *Royal Flush* — the highest cards in a poker game. The route starts left of *El Corazon* and climbs an obvious crack system parallel to that route. It joins *El Corazon* two pitches above the "heart" (the great heart-like pattern in the wall). Above this there is no independent logical line to the top. We took advantage of the good weather in the last week of January and were able to free climb the route in good conditions, except two little sections of five meters where the crack was still filled with ice. Altogether we spent 14 days over a period of six weeks on the wall. Every belay is equipped with three bolts. We left all the equipment (that was placed by a hammer) in the wall. To repeat the route I recommend two sets of Friends (up to number 4 Camelot) and two sets of Stoppers, 50-meter ropes, and ice equipment. In good conditions the whole route is free climbable at a standard of 5.12 (and loads of 5.11). It's mainly crack climbing (hands, fingers, laybacks, stemming). Only two pitches (numbers 12 and 13) have some rotten rock. The route is easy to abseil. The challenge now is to repeat *Royal Flush* alpine-style! Unfortunately Bernd Arnold's knee was broken by a falling piece of rock. After this accident the remaining 10 pitches of *El Corazon* to the top of Fitz Roy weren't of much interest to us. We took down all our equipment and fixed ropes and left for home. Altogether *Royal Flush* was one of the most exciting, challenging experiences in alpine climbing for me.

KURT ALBERT, *Germany*

*Fitz Roy, Northwest Buttress.* Italians Andrea Sarchi, Lorenzo Nadali and Mauro Girardi ascended the northwest buttress of Fitz Roy over four days in January. Their route, *Ensueño*, began in the *Super Couloir* before moving onto the buttress, where they moved quickly over some 6,000 feet of high-quality rock at difficulties at up to 7a and A1. An account of their ascent appears earlier in this journal.

Fitz Roy, showing A: *Royal Flush* (Albert-Arnold-Gershel-Richter, 1995);

B: *El Corazon* (Albert et al, 1993).

Kurt Albert