

Just two partner records were made on El Cap. The first was the West Buttress, which was climbed in 13:42 by Florine and Chandlee Harrel in July. The second was *The Realm of the Flying Monkeys*, which was climbed in 12:37 by Chandlee Harrel and Greg Murphy in September. Besides El Cap, other records of note were Cedar Wright and Dean Potter's climb of the South Face of Washington's Column in 1:59 in March, Cedar Wright and Ammon McNeely's climb of *Skull Queen* in June in a time of 2:59, and Cedar Wright's blitz of the *Royal Arches* car-to-car in 52 minutes and 26 seconds! On Leaning Tower, Ammon McNeely made a solo record of the West Face in 4:50 in September. Cecilia Buil of Spain made the fastest female solo of the same route in 11:30. Other proud female solos were of *Wyoming Sheep Ranch* over ten days, without fixed ropes, by Silvia Vidal (Spain) and *The Shortest Straw*, over five days without fixed ropes, by Aimee Aucoin. Both are thought to be first female solos, and likely the second or third solo overall of each route.

Finally, unreported from 1999 was Randy Leavitt's first ascent of the amazing corner on the Elephant's Graveyard, which was originally bolted by Roland Arsons. Leavitt removed some of the ill-placed bolts and instead used natural pro, including many ballnuts, in the seam. An initial difficult face section leads to an amazing corner that goes on wild stemming that gets harder as the corner becomes more overhanging to the right. Leavitt called the route *Book of Hate* and ventured a grade of 5.13d.

STEVE SCHNEIDER

Yosemite Valley, Russian Climbing Championships. The 2000 Russian Rock Climbing Championships took place in Yosemite Valley from August 15-September 10. All participants had that time period in which to climb as many routes as they could. Two teams from Moscow (Timur Akhmedkhanov and Alexander Lastochkin; Igor Pehterev and Maxim Pankov), one from St. Petersburg (Tengiz Verulashvili and Vladimir Kachkov), two from Magnitogorsk (Victor Igolkin and Yuri Oleinikov; Rinat Zaitov and Sergey Soldatov), and one mixed rope team (Lex Kratochvilla [Austria] and Arkady Serigin [Russia]) participated. Unfortunately, some of the strongest Russian climbers could not attend, because the U.S. Embassy did not give them entry visas. The jury was led by Gury Chunovkin and composed of four people. The general manger and organizer of the Championship was Anatoly Moshnikov.

The biggest problem was to make an absolute rating qualification of all the proposed climbing routes. This was done after a lot of discussion and with the help Chris McNamara's book *Yosemite Big Walls*. The Final Rating (FR) of each climb was calculated using the formula $FR = (2.2 + \text{jury rating from } 0 \text{ to } 0.2) \times (\text{fixed rating on the basis of } \textit{Yosemite Big Walls} \text{ route grades} + \text{two people climbing}/15) - \text{time of climbing (in days, measured in half days)}$. The final assessment would be made by calculating two routes (which all the teams were expected to be able to complete).

The joint Russian-Austrian team began first, followed by the three Russian rope teams. The team of Pehterev-Pankov made a start on the *Dihedral Wall* at midnight and returned the next evening because of unexpected route difficulty and lack of equipment. They made preparations for three days and finally started climbing the *Salathé Wall* route. The Magnitogorsk rope team of Igolkin-Oleynikov started *Wyoming Sheep Ranch* three days after the official starting day. They made a strategical mistake and climbed the last two days with almost no water.

After a few days, all the rope teams finished their first routes and returned to Camp 4. After the first round, almost all the teams had the same rating and had a chance to win the

Championship. The second round was started by the St. Petersburg team, who began up *Flight of the Albatross*. Igolkin-Oleynikov started the same route right behind them, followed by Zaitov-Soldatov. The St. Petersburg team took four days on the route; Igolkin-Oleynikov took three and a half days, and Zaitov-Soldatov needed three days. The international team, meanwhile, started on the *Atlantic Ocean Wall*; the Moscow team followed them. Unfortunately, both these rope teams took four days to climb the route.

On October 4, all rope teams reunited in Camp 4. After the second round, the winner was the Zaitov-Soldatov rope team. Second place was shared by about five rope teams; the final ordering depended on the judges. The St. Petersburg team did not finish the route (Verulashvili broke his leg).

The rope team of Igolkin-Oleynikov declared that they would climb one more route, the *Atlantic Ocean Wall*, and asked the judges to prolong the Championship for one more day. All the judges refused to do so. Igolkin-Oleynikov began to climb the route anyway, in order to win. The Championship deadline was 4 p.m., October 8. They managed to climb their route and returned at 9 a.m. on October 8. If their two best routes were declared eligible, they would be the winners.

A discussion in Moscow by all the judges and some of the teams (basically one from Moscow, who did not want Igolkin and Oleynikov's third route calculated) ensued. In the event their third route was not considered, they would come in second to last. After a long, long discussion in the Russian Mountaineering Federation, and a long discussion in the mountaineering public, the rope team of Igolkin-Oleynikov was declared the winner. (*Competitions in United States national parks are illegal.—Ed.*)

ANATOLY MOSHNIKOV, *Russia*

El Capitan, New Route. It was reported that E.J. Luis Garcia Gallego and Alfonso Cerdán (Spain) established the route *Murcia* (VI 5.10 A4) on El Capitan over 44 days. Further details are lacking. (Servei General d'Informació de Muntanya)

El Capitan, Lurking Fear, First Free Ascent. We'd come to free the *Muir*. My partner wiggled at the possibility of being bombed by the crowds on *The Shield*, even after we had onsighted 11 pitches up to Mammoth Terraces. So he went home. Orphaned and alone, I tried to find partners in the Valley to free climb with, but that can be harder than the climbing. Beth Rodden had caught my eye a few weeks earlier and our relationship was just beginning. She randomly suggested that we try to free *Lurking Fear*, over by the West Buttress. *Lurking's* slabbiness would better suit her. Adventure, romance—what was there to lose?

During this time (late May), San Francisco was experiencing record heat, topping the scales around 105°F. We figured that the only climbable time on the route would be the early morning, so each day we would sleep in the portaledge, climb in the morning for a few hours and then retreat to the Merced.

The two most gruesome pitches were two and seven, the only two that had never been freed. Pitch two was relentless, and would lacerate our finger tips after just one try. After about seven days of work, we finally conquered the monster. However, the difficulties did not end there. The next four pitches offered some of the best climbing in the Valley. A pitch of tricky face climbing followed by three leads of beautiful 5.12 thin cracks led to the next crux pitch. A blank, slabby, traversing pitch, protected by rivets, finally yielded after three mornings of work.