

*Cerro Fitz Roy, north face.* During January Frenchmen Jerome Arpin, Sylvain Empereur, Yannick Ponson, and Lionel Pouzadoux climbed a new route on the north face of Fitz Roy. They spent a total of six days working on the route and fixed ropes to pitch 20 (around 800 meters of rope). They summited late in the evening on January 22, 2002. Their line starts just right of the Polish route and reaches the Grand Hotel, a big ledge halfway up the face, in about 16 pitches. There it crosses Tehuelche and climbs a crack system just right of Tehuelche's most obvious feature, Marco's Dihedral. They climbed a total of 32 pitches (1,200 meters), with difficulties up to 6b+ and A2+. They descended the route. For a repeat they recommend taking three or four sets of cams, stoppers, some copperheads, many pins, and a few hooks. Belay anchors are in place.

ROLANDO GARIBOTTI, AAC, *Club Andino Bariloche*

*Fitz Roy, Supercanaleta.* Max Berger, Jérôme Blanc-Gras, and I made a winter ascent of Supercanaleta on Fitz Roy on August 9. Ours was the third or fourth winter ascent, the first reported winter ascent having been made by Argentine climbers.

Conditions were okay. We climbed everything with ice axes and crampons, even pitches indicated on the topo as rock. Our dry-tooling experience allowed us to go faster. We climbed the route in just over 26 hours. We didn't sleep, taking only two hour-long breaks during the 46-hour round trip. Because it was too cold to sleep, we didn't have sleeping bags or a tent, just bivouac bags. We tried the route once before the successful ascent but were stopped by bad weather after a 1,000 meters. We reached the summit at 2:30 a.m., with a full moon and no wind, just very cold temperatures (about -30°C). It is a very beautiful route, varied and continuous, with hard parts all along the climb. To see photos of the Supercanaleta go to <http://www.mountain-ski.com/photo/expedition/2001super-couloir/>

ERWAN LE LANN, *France*

*Fitz Roy, Supercanaleta and Californian Roulette; Cerro Torre, Compressor Route; free-solos and speed-solos.* The pressure is rising. Clear skies move from the south, and brilliant stars appear overhead. In under three weeks in Patagonia, I have soloed Fitz Roy and Cerro Torre. Already I have far exceeded my expectations, yet I still search for something within these mountains.

My first and only objective was to solo Fitz Roy. I arrived at its base and waited for three days until conditions were perfect. I rested, gaining strength and confidence, and became obsessed with "light is right." Leaving most of my climbing gear and warm clothing, I carried only one quart of water and no bivouac gear. Two hours before dawn I stood before the Supercanaleta (VI 5.10 WI 4) and felt naked staring up at its 6,000-foot face. A wave of shivers rose up my body, and I subconsciously committed. Entranced by the fact that any mistake meant death, I sunk my ice tools so aggressively that I scarcely noticed blood soaking my mitts, leaving blotches on the ice. The sight drove me even deeper into a calm, decisive survival state, and I moved as if in a dream, free soloing through thinning ice and beautifully split alpine granite. Just under six and a half hours later, at 10:14 a.m., I awoke on the summit, crying and laughing, screaming "Fitz Roy" over and over.

Five days later I awoke again. Writhing in and out of the fetal position, exhausted and freezing, I lay cocooned in a tinfoil survival blanket at the Col of Patience, 1,000 feet up Patagonia's most formidable peak, Cerro Torre. I'd just speed-soloed the Compressor Route (VI 5.11a

A2 WI 4), capped by its mushroom tip, in eight and a half hours, and returned to the "Bus," a natural ice cave where I now waited. I sat up into a meditative pose and tried the yoga technique Heated Breath. I focused on breathing into my lower abdomen with resistance in the back of my throat, imagining my heart pumping strongly, forcing warm blood to the far reaches of my extremities. My body did heat up a little, and I maintained the pose for a few hours, but fatigue and the presence of four Russian climbers, properly equipped, huddled together snoring, threw off my concentration.

The Russians had planned to be halfway up the route, leaving me their bivy gear, so I could wait and descend the glacier with them safely. A sudden storm stopped them, and they wisely decided to wait, leaving me with the choice of an open bivouac or descending the glacier unroped. Panicked thoughts caused me to lose control of my meditation and talk to myself. "You don't want to lose your toes, Dean." "You can't cross the glacier alone, that's how soloists die." "The crevasses don't care how well you climb." "Food, warmth, sleep...I'm freezing." I laughed at the contrast of how warm I was, in the early morning sun, when I started rock climbing from here. Untethered for the entire climb except the final Bridwell pitch, I was only connected by a few millimeters of sticky rubber and half-finger holds as I went through the free cruxes. The haunting image of my single etrier sailing away in the wind of the brewing storm, before Maestri's endless bolts, recycled through my mind's eye. My legs were cramped from overkicking through the ice towers and high-stepping into single slings up hundreds of bolts. Hours later, with the storm undoubtedly upon us, I was way colder than before, and I cracked. Throwing the dice, I packed my frozen gear and left the Russians. I rappelled blindly into clouded darkness. At the bottom of the rappels I rationalized that it was the coldest part of the day, and the ice bridges were as frozen as they would be. I started walking, and within a few steps my right leg plunged into an airy hole, as I struggled not to go in. Totally tuned to all of my senses, I moved deliberately across the glacier. Pushed by the wind, I arrived at my stash under a boulder and passed out.

Ten days later I'm back at Fitz Roy, this time poised at Polackos base camp, directly below an obvious line on Fitz Roy's southwest side. This couloir was attempted in 1970 by Argentines, who joined the 1967 California route but did not reach the summit. It has been attempted many times and is named after one of the people who died on the route, Pippo Frasson Couloir. I feel strongly for all who have gone before me and give thanks, knowing I am standing on their shoulders. Staring up at its looming serac and 7,100 feet of elevation gain, it's easy to see why the route hasn't been completed. I clear my mind of every distraction and open my soul to the energies of the mountains. I need to be sure of what I'm seeking by entering the world of solo alpine climbing. Last night I asked myself why, and could not answer with words. This morning I sit totally alert at 1:30 a.m., buzzing with every emotion, tapped into my intuition and feeling every fiber of my body pulsing with strength I never felt possible. I realize that, so far, death consequence is the only thing that brings me close to my potential energy. I put it all toward moving up, and start. I open my mouth and screech a piercing cry, which focuses me on my outer breath, a technique used in martial arts, in lethal battle.

My mind becomes empty, and I move without a flaw up 4,000 feet of crack systems, ramps, and polished slabs on either side of the gully that marks my way. I am forced to smear through holdless sections up to 5.10+ in order to stay out of the fall line. I switch into leather boots and crampons, and my world turns vertical, as I delicately pick my way up a 100-foot, 90-degree, three-inch-thick ice smear. Melting water flows between the ice and rock, and every

minute or two I am showered with blasts of graupel. I sink my tools and hang straight-armed until things stop falling and calmly tack my way up the impermanent flow. I mix-climb for another thousand feet, to the Italian Col. I traverse toward the start of the California Route and continue climbing, all free-solo, carrying only essential rappel gear (100 meters of 6 mm rope, stoppers, hexes, one ice screw, V-thread, three small Camalots, some sling, four locking 'biners, and eight Neutrinos). On the summit slope I lose control of my breath, my heart rate accelerates, and I feel dizzy and nauseous. My thoughts twist, and I wonder, "Is this the big one?" Unable to regain my composure, I stop, eat the rest of my food, drink some water, and pop three aspirin. "I pushed too hard," I think but still stumble toward the top. Almost crawling, I reach the summit, completing the first integral ascent of Californian Roulette (VI 5.10+ WI5).

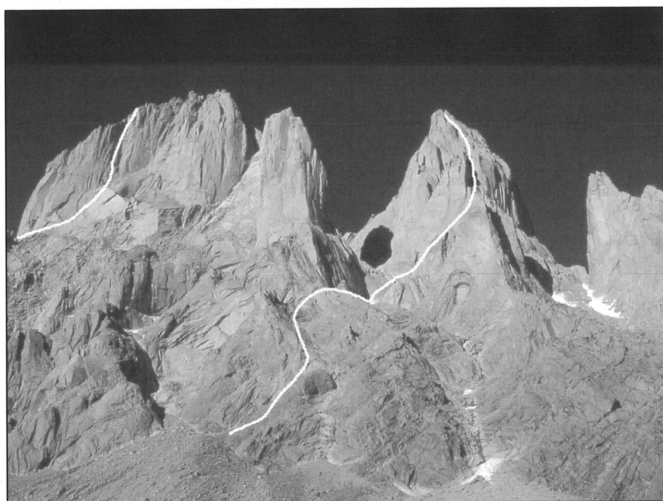
After an hour basking on the top, I down climb to the edge of the summit ridge and start rappelling. Two raps down, I pull my ropes and, blinded by the sun, only hear something falling. A toaster-sized block hits my leg, and my world goes black. I come to from the noise of my own screaming. My pants are ripped and bloody, and swelling stiffens my leg. In shock, I peg-leg for 30 more raps and hobble across the east-side glacier, passing several soft, melting ice bridges on my stomach because I can't jump.

I reach the snow caves at Paso Superior at dusk, hoping someone is there to help me, but everybody is gone. Captured by survival instinct, I move until I am warm, then lay down and sleep, continuing this cycle all night long, until I reach the camp at Rio Blanco at 4 a.m., 24 hours from when I started. I fall asleep in one of the log huts and am soon awakened by friends and taken care of. Though injured I enjoy a rare time of being content doing nothing, savoring each moment I'm alive.

DEAN POTTER

*Cerro Domo Blanco, Son of Jurel; Aguja Poincenot, Southern Cross; Cerro Piergiorgio, attempt.* In January 2002 Jonathan Copp and I arrived in Chalten intending to climb a new route on the west face of Cerro Piergiorgio. We never succeeded in this goal, but we completed two new routes on other formations.

During reconnaissance of the west face of Piergiorgio we decided that an alpine-style first ascent would be unlikely. Few crack systems extend from bottom to top. New routes would certainly be possible but for those with the patience, fortitude, and stubbornness to carry heavy nailing racks and fixed rope up to the base. We decided to attempt the original route, Greenpeace (M. Manica and R. Vettori,



Aguja Poincenot: Southern Cross, 2002, Copp-Taylor. Left: Cerro Fitz Roy: Tonta Suerte, 2002, Martin-O'Neill. Jonathan Copp