

pitches are rated A4/A4+. The sixth pitch is the crux, involving about 30' on skyhooks and a 15' pendulum to a crack climbed with RURPs and copperheads. A further 13 or 14 pitches are A3. The climb took 25 days, and Czyz's return to the base of the wall took two additional days of rappelling. He left 40 bolts, 30 as belay anchors, and used 40 rivets. Jacek Czyz is a Polish climber residing in Chicago and an AAC member. He has climbed El Cap 16 times, including solo ascents of the Reticent Wall and Zanyatta Mondatta.

WLADYSLAW JANOWSKI

*Salathé, one-day free ascents.* In December 2001 I was in a hospital bed after severing my left index finger in a home-remodeling accident. The digit had been reattached but wasn't looking good. There were stitches and pins protruding through the skin here and there, and the surgery point was swollen to the size of a golf ball. There had been a constant drip of blood from the end of my finger for two weeks, causing me to lose over half of my blood.

During my time in the hospital I did a lot of thinking. Some of the time my mind was full of doubt about whether I would ever again be able to climb near my previous potential. But as the days went on, something else grew inside me. I realized how much climbing meant to me and how I wanted to be as much a part of it as possible. I felt driven as I had never felt before. I decided not to let this injury slow me down.

In March my fiancée Beth Rodden and I headed to Yosemite. I had decided that the Salathé, free in a day, would be the first big test of my recovery. On May 15, after a few warm-up climbs, we started up the Salathé. The lower part of the route went fast, and at 3 p.m. we were approaching the headwall and the hardest pitch.

The first headwall pitch is one of the most beautiful I have seen. It is 180' long, overhanging, and shockingly exposed. As I climbed my forearms swelled. Fifteen feet from the top I stopped and tried to recover, placed my one remaining piece and furiously shook one arm at a time, trying to relieve my pump. If I fell here, that would be the end of my energy, and I would have to accept defeat. I jammed my fingertips as hard as I could and pulled the last few moves to the anchor. A few hours later we were on top. We arrived just as the sun set. It was a huge victory for me. I knew I had overcome my injury.

A few weeks later Yuji Hirayama arrived in the Valley, also to free-climb the Salathé in a day. During one week he tried the route twice. Although he came close, a complete free ascent eluded him. In September he returned with a bigger goal: to combine some of the crux pitches, thereby eliminating all hanging belays except one at the lip of the headwall roof. He succeeded on his second try, in 13 hours and 20 gigantic pitches. Yuji's style bumped the grade of the hardest pitch from 5.13b to 5.13d. It was a truly proud ascent.

TOMMY CALDWELL, AAC

*El Capitan, The Nose, speed record.* Events leading up to the record speed ascent of the Nose in 2 hours and 48 minutes: September 2001, Hans Florine and Tommy Caldwell climb the Nose in 4:31. They miss the nine-year-old record of 4:22 by only nine minutes. Mid-October 2001, Timmy O'Neill and Dean Potter climb the Nose in 3:59, breaking the record. Later in October 2001, Jim Herson and Florine climb it in 3:57. November 1, 2001, O'Neill and Potter set a blazing time of 3:24.