



The northwest bowl of Nevado Uta, showing the Berube-Frimer attempt (left) and the Powell-Samuel near-miss.

After climbing numerous ice pitches into the night, we fashioned a bivy platform by hacking a notch in the crest of a fluting at ca 5,700m. We were now about 16 pitches up. A strong snow-storm blew in during the night, forcing us to retreat on the third day, a hard decision since we were within 80m of the northeast ridge, where most difficulties would have ended. Our committing descent, involving multiple traversing rappels, lasted about 10 hours and included one 60m free rappel. Difficulties up to our high point were 5.8 A2 M5 AI4. Thanks to the Mugs Stump Award for supporting our trip.

YANIK BERUBE, *Canada*

*Nevado Uta to summit ridge, west-northwest face, solo.* The two days of walking, battling for space in chicken-filled colectivos, and bus transport played hell with my battered body. Al Powell and I had been attempting a new line on the southeast face of Jirishanca in the Huayhuash. Feeling the pressure of time and competition, we had forced the issue a little and paid the price. I had been hit by an avalanche that threw me 200' down the gully nicknamed, aptly, the Death Couloir. Powell joined in the fun for a way but got spit out, becoming my knight in shining armor and digging me from my snowy resting point.

Arriving in Huaraz I was placed on the scrap-heap for broken mountaineers. Powell joined with Owen Samuel to try a line on Uta's unclimbed northwest bowl. Having sprained ligaments in my knee and shoulder and torn muscles in my groin, back, and ribs, I was faced with an early return to Britain. Listening to the Powell-Samuel battle plan and watching bags being packed was torture. I could take no more, so I doubled the dose of anti-inflammatories and packed my bag, too. In five minutes the job was completed: an ice screw, harness, 50m of 7mm cord, and two axes—I was prepared! I packed extra pills at the expense of food. Keeping my sack light seemed the only way possible for me to complete the approach.

Unsure of my mental state and my ability to climb, I set off with Powell and Samuel the following day, June 7. Eventually, after much grimacing, I joined the pair as they stood beneath the Eigerlike face. Their intended line ran up the height of the face on dripping icicles that were melting rapidly. Having only come for “a look” and maybe to take a photo or two, I wished them well and limped off for a glance around the corner at the west-northwest face.

Watching pin pricks of light move up to the northwest bowl at 11 p.m., I snuggled into my bag feeling no pressure whatever—it was a miracle I had made it up to here. An hour later I set off on my chemically enhanced adventure, moving slowly to reduce the depth of my breathing—an attempt to alleviate the pain from torn intercostal muscles. It didn’t work. Harboring secret ambitions that a direct line, climbing the left side of the west-northwest face, might go, I picked my way up the steep ice-slope beneath the face. The mushrooms on the summit ridge had appeared small when I scoped the face on the taxi-drive in, but only time would tell.

Crossing thin bridges over monster crevasses made me glad I had nothing except washing line in my sack. The ice was perfect; my trashed body, in a Voltarol (anti-inflammatory)-induced numbness, appeared to be coping with the demands of the climbing. Steady WI3/4 following deep flutings led to the middle of the face. A left-rising traverse was made to join a series of runnels. In the dark they appeared to be continuous, running up the left side of the face. The climbing became more tenuous and steeper in the runnels, thin ice covering compact rock, until, about six pitches from the mushrooms, things got interesting. Picking my way from one thin, rotten ice patch to another focused my thinking and slowed me. Finally, just beneath the summit, the ice disappeared and was replaced with 90° rock, covered in powder. The climbing was sustained M5, and looking down 1,000' of ice made me realize that the sun was up and working its deadly, destructive powers. The need to get off the face quickly was apparent, but with only a few feet left before reaching the summit slope, I couldn’t resist. Crawling between two mushrooms deposited me on the summit plateau. It had taken seven hours to reach this point, sustained climbing at an overall grade of ED1.

The need to start descending immediately, before the sun turned the face into a melting death trap, forced me not to visit the true summit. The original Bullock plan was to downclimb as much of the route as possible, but with the first few steps I discovered that lowering using the knackered left shoulder was as painful as hell. The steep ground would have been impossible to downclimb anyway, so an epic of rappelling on washing-line for 75' at a time began. I found that threading the 7mm cord directly through Abalakov threads worked well. Staring at the melting mushrooms above encouraged me to move quickly, but it still took six hours to reach the base of the face, 13.5 hours from when I started. The following day I hitched a ride in the back of a truck, and one colectivo trip deposited my broken body into Huaraz, land of cake, comfort, and pharmacies.

NICK BULLOCK, U.K.

*Bullock was unaware of the West-northwest Face route (Earl–Trimble, 2000), and suspects that his solo roughly follows that line. Further investigation indicates that Bullock may have climbed independent ground on the right at the bottom and top, joining the Earl–Trimble line in the middle portion—Ed.*

*Ocshapalca, south face.* Back in Huaraz after the Huayhuash, I rejoined my friend Iñigo Mujica (Note: Baró Ramon and Mujica had climbed on Chacaraju and Jirishanca Norte. See note in