

Upon descending to El Chalten, Taki departed for his final semester of law school, Paul turned his attention to new routing in El Chalten, and Fred and I waited out poor weather for most of January, until the following scenario played out:

It is 4 a.m., January 23, 2006, the wind is ripping and rain drips into our bivy cave at high camp. When a big gust comes, or the wind suddenly changes direction, it snaps loudly, like the crack of a whip. Freddie groans, and I roll over and try to sleep a bit more.

By 8 a.m. the wind still blows strongly, but the rain has stopped. We sip instant coffee and recommence strategizing. A large portion of our mental energy over the past five weeks has been spent strategizing, plotting, and scheming, to be ready to strike out when the elusive weather window arrives. Having learned the hard way that attempting a summit on a marginal day can waste time and energy, this past week—the last week in our trip—we blew it on one of the best sunny streaks of the season. Now, bivied at high camp, we are riddled with angst and hungry.

At 10 a.m. the wind suddenly quiets. It's late, but rather than something we know we can do quickly, we set out for a new route we have been eyeing on Desmochada. We will scramble up 3,000' of 4th- and 5th-class terrain to reach a 2,600' vertical wall, split with continuous crack systems. We have 44 hours before we have to be 15 miles from here, in El Chalten to catch our flight home.

At 1 a.m., January 24, we sit on the summit in strong and increasing wind. We have climbed a new route (The Sound and the Fury) up the 2,600' south face, on a steep, continuous crack system between El Facón and El Condor, mostly free (5.11+, with short sections of A0). We have made the fourth ascent of Desmochada, and now have 29 hours to get from the summit to El Chalten. As we descend our line, winds whip into cracking gusts by our fourth rappel, sending one of our ropes sailing sideways, snagging too far away to pendulum out to. We are forced to leave the rope and make 20m rappels. Halfway down, a whiteout engulfs us. We make it back to town after a slow, cold, harrowing descent: a 38-hour push from high camp to summit to town.

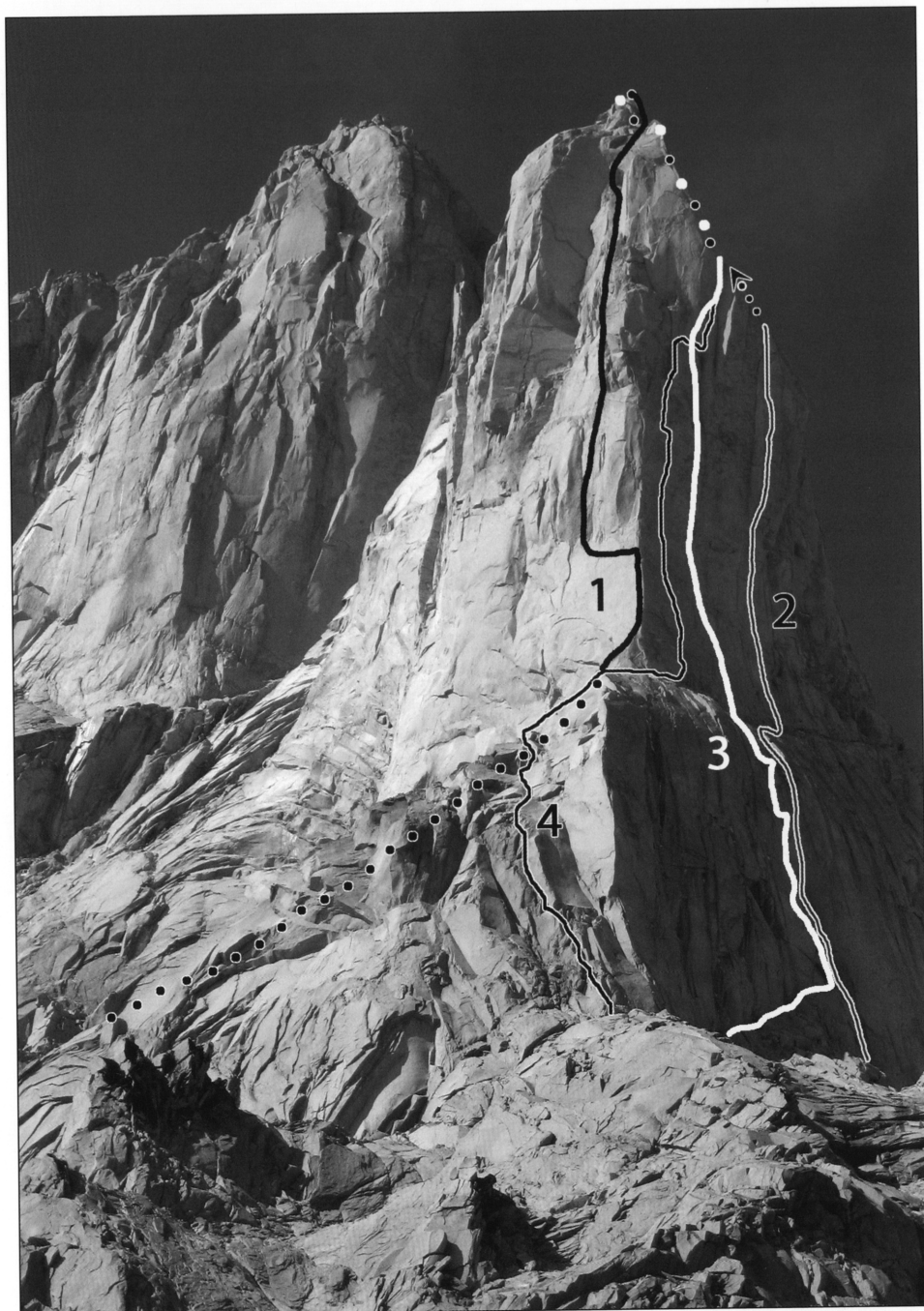
After a celebratory steak and liter of beer we pass out in a field and sleep through our 6 a.m. alarm clock. Magically, Fred wakes up as the bus is leaving. I chase it down in my skivvies, successfully convincing the driver to wait for us.

DAVE SHARRATT

*Desmochada, Golden Eagle.* On January 29 German Alexander Huber and I went from Bridwell Camp to Campo de los Polacos, directly below the west face of Aguja Desmochada. The next morning at 6 a.m. we started up the lower slab to the beginning of the actual climbing, at the base of the prominent southwest buttress of Desmochada.

At 9 a.m. we started climbing and reached the end of the vertical, central part. We fixed our two climbing ropes and rappelled back to the "Eagle's Nest," a perfect bivy platform. After a beautiful and exposed bivy, we started again at first light and, despite the chill and wind, made the summit at 11 a.m. We descended via the fully equipped The Sound and the Fury [see above] and made it back to Campo de los Polacos at 6 p.m. The next morning saw us, with all our equipment, walking back to Campo Bridwell.

Our new route, Golden Eagle, more or less follows the line of the prominent southwest buttress. We climbed the lower, less-than-vertical part just left of the buttress, while the dead-vertical central part of the route follows the obvious continuous crack system just right of the



Aguja Desmochada: (1) El Condor (Bridwell-Dunmire-Smith, 1988). (2) El Facón (Bowers-Bransby-Tresch, 2004). (3) The Sound and the Fury (Sharratt-Wilkinson, 2006). (4) Golden Eagle (Huber-Siegrist, 2006). Not show: Dieta del Lagarto (variation to El Facón; Cortes-Walsh-Zegers, 2005). Alexander Huber

buttress. Above the “Eagle’s Nest” the route joins The Sound and the Fury. The rest of the route follows the low-angle line of the buttress.

We made the first ascent of Golden Eagle without any prior exploring or preparation: fully alpine style from Campo Bridwell to Campo Bridwell. Because of snowfall in the days just before our ascent, the cracks of the first three pitches of the vertical, central part of the wall were iced up and made the climbing difficult. Thus, we had to aid two short sections of the first of these pitches, but under better conditions this pitch should go free at 5.11. The rest of the route went free, even though, due to the cold, we had to rest several times on several pitches (French free, difficulties up to 5.11).

The central part of the route offers mostly steep climbing in hand and fist cracks. The granite is typically very rough, and tape might be helpful. The rest of the 25-pitch route is moderate and not-too-steep face climbing.

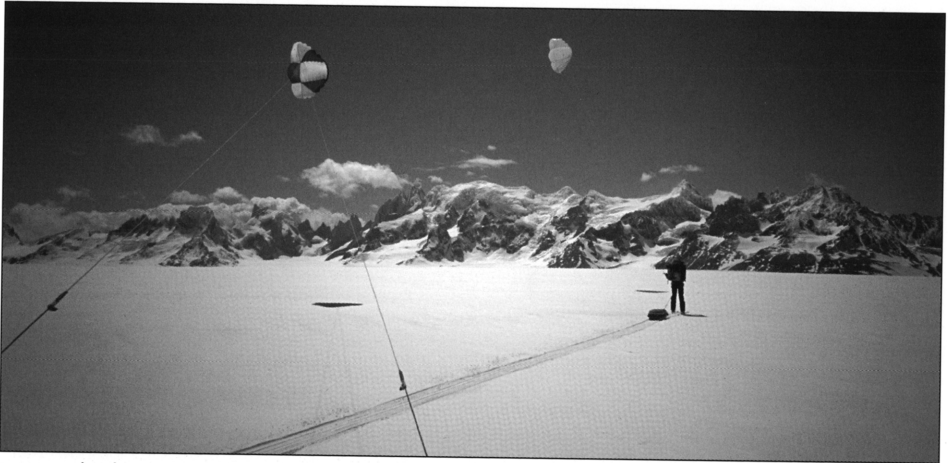
We recommend bringing Camalots 0-4, with doubles in the midrange sizes, plus a full set of stoppers. Though not necessary, a small set of pitons might be sensible. Except for one piton in pitch nine and one stopper at the belay after that pitch, there is no gear in place.

STEPHAN SIEGRIST, *Switzerland*

*Various ski descents.* In the fall Ben Bowers, Ben Ditto, and I completed a ski mountaineering circumnavigation of the Fitz Roy massif. Christened the “Southern Patagonia Ice Cap Expedition”—SPICE Tour for short—we traveled 65 miles, completed several ski descents, used traction kites for high-speed glacier travel, and endured some of the most notoriously bad weather on earth.

Starting from El Chalten we walked and horse-packed up the Rio Electrico valley, then shuttled heavy loads up talus slopes and crevasse fields to the edge of ice cap. After establishing a camp on a rocky ledge, we endured a four-day wind, rain, and snow storm, with steady winds of 40-50 mph and gusts of over 70 mph.

After a break in the weather, we ascended the nearby Gorra Blanca Peak and made a ski descent from the mushroom-capped summit down the southwest face to the west ridge.



Ben Ditto leading some high-speed glacier travel, with Cerro Torre in the background. *Andrew McLean*