

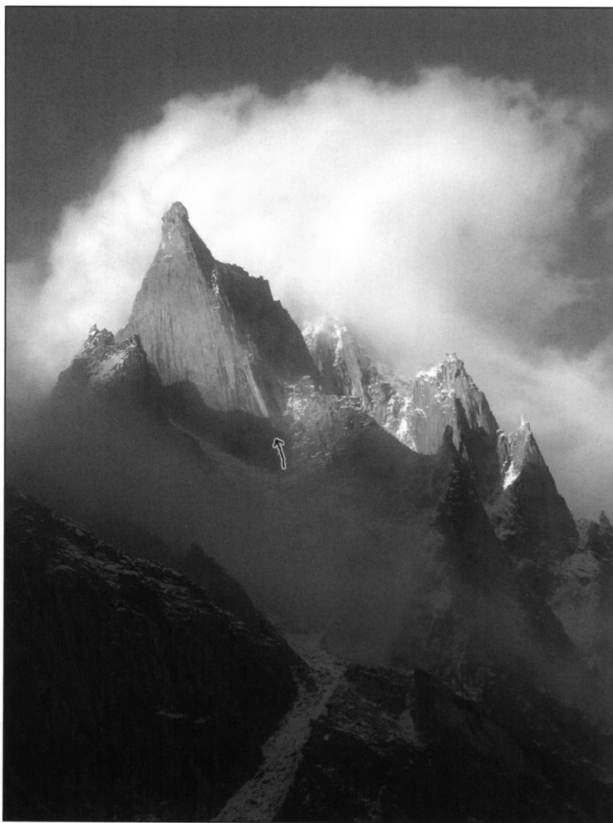
breaking through the cornice to find a spot suitable for a bivouac. The vertical, unconsolidated snow seemed bottomless and nearly impossible to protect. We carved out a small ledge below a mushroom atop the rock ridge, and I recognized it as the same place I had camped in 1997, nearly halfway up the climb, at 5900m.

Despite our rapid progress, the loose snow would soon seal our fate, and next morning, after several frustrating hours and less than a rope length of progress, we abandoned our attempt in impossible conditions. As Doug remarked, "You need a snow blower, not ice tools." We descended directly to the glacier on the west side of the ridge, reaching the Choktoi that day in about 26 rappels, considerably quicker than our descent along the main ridge in '97.

With Latok I out of the question and Doug heading back to the U.S., Steve and I looked around for another objective. We made one attempt on the southeast ridge of the Ogre, but again found deep and dangerous snow in the initial icefall. On July 20 we settled for a new-route attempt on the pointed Choktoi Tower, ca 5700m, the peak that forms an island at the head of the Choktoi Glacier. Steve and I climbed a long couloir on the north side of the tower to a rock col northwest of the summit. From there we traversed and ascended for eight or nine steep pitches on rock of increasing difficulty (to 5.11 A1), moving from one side of the ridge to the other. We were stopped just 4m from the true summit by a short, blank wall. Nonetheless it was great climb, with superb position on the ridge. We descended through a tranquil night and reached our glacier camp by 9 a.m. after 27 hours of climbing, just as it started to snow. Unbeknownst to us, the peak had been climbed to the top by the opposite rock ridge the year before by a Canadian team (Relph-Walsh, 2006).

MARK RICHEY, AAC

*The Bean Pole, first ascent; Latok I attempt.* On July 12 Bean Bowers and I headed up the north ridge of Latok I to put in a cache and check out the bottom section of the climb. Skirting to the west the rock buttress climbed by many parties, we climbed 3,500' to ca 18,500' (5,639m) in seven hours. The climbing was mostly moderate and low-angle,



The Bean Pole (ca 18,500') on the north side of Choktoi Glacier. Bean Bowers and Josh Wharton climbed six long pitches (5.11+ A0) to the summit, starting on the southeast pillar and then moving right. Josh Wharton

and despite the fact that there was obviously more difficult climbing to come, we both felt optimistic that given some good fortune with weather and conditions we had a chance to succeed. Unfortunately luck was not on our side. In 42 days at base camp we experienced only two truly good days, and the pressure never went more than a few points in either direction. Despite frequent desperate calls to our weather forecaster in Montana, the news was always grim.

On July 20 Bean and I climbed a small rock spire (ca 18,500') on the north side of Choktoi Glacier. The peak is obvious and aesthetic when seen from base camp below Latok's northern flank. We climbed six long pitches on the southeast pillar of the formation. The first 500' were surprisingly steep, with two pitches of 5.11 and a third of 5.11+ A0, which I was able to follow free at 5.12-. The remaining 500' proved relatively easy as we weaved around the peak to the east; Bean gained the summit with 40' of unprotected 5.8. We named the peak the Bean Pole in honor of Bean's first trip up an unclimbed peak. I recommend the route and encourage ambitious teams to bring a few pins and beaks to explore the thin splitters on the south face proper.

JOSH WHARTON, AAC

*Peak 5,750m, the Outside Penguin; Latok II attempts.* Backed by the AAC's Lyman Spitzer Award and Mountain Equipment Co-op, our team had chosen as an objective the unclimbed feature under and southwest of Latok II (7,103m). We facetiously named this gargantuan gendarme "Latok 11<sup>3/4</sup>" (ca 6,300–6,500m); its southwest face presents a large wall of near-vertical unclimbed granite. Because of nearly continuous bad weather, this normally rock-climbable objective was shrouded in verglas and powder, rendering it too full-on for the likes of us.

Ryan Hokanson and Sam Johnson made two attempts on Latok II's northwest ridge, the first with Ken Glover. During their first try they climbed ice and mixed ground up to M7 (M6R) on the west face and then began a snow traverse to the ridge. They descended from 5,600m because of illness. On the second attempt, Hokanson and Johnson bypassed the mixed ground by simul-soloing a 900m ice ramp to reach a camp under a gendarme at 6,000m. They spent three nights here in a storm before descending amid dangerous avalanche conditions.

Ken Glover and I turned our attention to lower altitudes, and settled on Peak 5,750m, located two peaks down a ridge to the southwest of Latok II. Italians may have climbed the peak in 1977, and Americans Doug Chabot and Jack Tackle climbed it from the north in 2000. Its triangular south face rises 1,200m out of the talus-covered Baintha Lukpar Glacier and appears to have some of the best granite in the valley. On July 30, at the tail end of one of the few high-pressure systems of the season, we started up the rightmost of the twin buttresses with light alpine packs, carrying one sleeping bag, two down jackets, and a thin tarp as the extent of our bivy gear.

The face presented three steep headwalls. After an initial broken section, we reached the base of the first headwall, framed on its right by a ridge crest. By traversing two pitches, we reached the crest and followed it upward for a pitch before it stopped us at a blank overhang. A slab traverse right dropped us into a chimney, which we followed for three pitches to a sandy ledge atop the initial headwall. The second steep headwall loomed above. Searching for the line of weakness, we traversed two pitches to the right, where we climbed a ramp system before slipping behind a prow to find a hidden corner. Above the corner, moderate terrain led to a scree slope and a comfortable bivy.