

*Aconcagua, Medicine Buddha to summit ridge.* After acclimatizing on the Normal Route, on the summer solstice I scoped the 3,000m south face with intent to attempt a new route on the left side of the face, between the original French Route and the Romanian variation to the Slovenian Route. The bergschrund looked crossable, but the initial vertical ice pitch gushed with water. I walked away, and minutes later a huge avalanche swept the route and cone where I had stood. I tried to steel my nerves against the possibility that I could be swept into the debris at the base from any point on the route. I told myself that this was my route, and in eight hours I would be on it.

Back at Plaza Francia I was confident that I could climb the south face via a new route in a day, so I did not take a sleeping bag or tent, just 30m of 8.1mm rope,

some climbing hardware, a stove, food, and extra clothes. I rested for a few hours before rising at 1:30 a.m. I centered myself with a meditation session before preparing for my departure.

I left camp at 4 a.m. I crossed two large crevasses before reaching the bergschrund, and headed up until I hit a dead-end. Finally, after 3½ hours I was in the couloir proper. Suddenly a massive avalanche rushed past, putting me on constant alert. I kept climbing and at mid-route reached a large ice step near an island of rock. Then I heard and felt a huge serac release and looked up to see ice shooting off the top of the rock island, followed by a billowing avalanche cloud. I ran, looking for somewhere to hide—nothing. I flopped on my face, with my arm cocked for an air pocket and prepared to be buried. Fine snow and 40–60 mph winds blasted me. When I continued, a solid pitch of WI4 led past the rock island and into a large, scoured basin, directly below the upper seracs. I crossed the basin to its left and looked back just as another serac released down the ice pitch. Timing is everything.

An hour later, at nearly 20,000', I climbed a 25' section of gently overhanging ice to surmount a bulge, and, above, I moved away from the seracs and onto the upper glacier. I had completed the first 2,000m in 12½ hours [to approximately where he joined the Messner Route—Ed.], but soon I encountered horrible unconsolidated sugar snow that dissolved underfoot. My progress slowed to less than 200' per hour. I had nearly 3,000' to go. At 11 p.m., after 19 hours of climbing, I knew I would not reach the summit in a day, and thought of how to counter hypothermia and frostbite. I descended to a block of ice on the hanging glacier and



*Medicine Buddha, on the south face of Aconcagua, with the spot of Kellogg's shiverfest bivy also indicated. Chad Kellogg*

sought protection from the wind, as the temperature dipped below 10°F. I shivered away the night until the sun's greeting licked away the cold.

Tenuous sections of vertical ice led to the open face of the upper Argentine Route. I was within 1,200 vertical feet of the summit ridge, but half a day away in the deep sugar snow. At 2 p.m. I was above 21,500', but stuck in poor snow, daggering with both axes for upward purchase. I had been out of water since mid-morning and had used my last fuel canister. I desperately needed to reach the summit ridge by nightfall, and all of my life force clawed slowly upward. Then the sun went behind the ridge and the temperature dropped. I strained to keep up with the sun, because I knew that darkness was close behind. There were six corpses on the south face, and I did not want to join them. Eventually I traversed left for 1,500', directly below the ridge, working steadily. At 8 p.m., with a frostbitten thumb, I radioed my position to Gonzalo with the Guardaparques office. He encouraged me to push on and told me that rangers would be waiting at Camp Nido de Condorez when I descended. I reached the ridge between the south and north summits at 10 p.m, welcomed by 50 mph wind. I walked like a drunken sailor. Around midnight I reached the Canaleta and descended familiar terrain. I had spent 42 hours on the south face, 35 of those climbing. I named the route Medicine Buddha (6,500' new, VI WI4 M4), after my favorite meditation *sadhana*. The *sadhana* is about the healing qualities of the Ocean King. Speaking the mantra is supposed to protect someone from an untimely death.

At 1:30 a.m. I made it to the ranger station at Nido. Oscar, Gonzalo, and Juan greeted me and offered hot drinks and a place to sleep. I related the story until 4 a.m. Then I crawled into my sleeping bag and slept soundly.

CHAD KELLOGG, AAC

*Cerro El Cuerno, Direct South Face.* On Cerro El Cuerno (5,462m), near Aconcagua, in February 2010 Argentines Jorge Ackermann and Tomás Aguiló opened a direct route (500m, 90° WI5) on the south face.

MARCELO SCANU, Buenos Aires, Argentina

*Various climbs, Cordón de la Jaula.* A group has been active in this area of Argentina, west of the Cordón del Plata, near Aconcagua but much more isolated. Access has been by the El Plata-Vallecitos col and Quebrada del Peine, after the Quebrada de la Jaula. On October 17 Pablo González, Gabriel Barral, and Alcides Massa left a 4,000m moraine camp and ascended the west face of a virgin 5,147m peak, which they christened Pico El Fede, in honor of Federico Campanini, who died on Aconcagua. They then traversed west and ascended two other peaks, making the second ascents of 5,168m Pico San Esteban and 5,165m Pico Rosa. All three climbs were on 40° snow. A few days earlier Gabriel Moretta, Matías Cruz, and Pablo Ruiz made the first ascent of a 5,245m peak near El Fede, calling it Pico Campanini, by coincidence also in honor of Federico Campanini. (The two groups were unaware of each other.) Their route climbs the south face via a 700m couloir, with 40–70° ice, and a crux 20m serac with ice to 90°. Above the couloir they continued, with climbing to 70°, up a ridge and to the summit.

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