

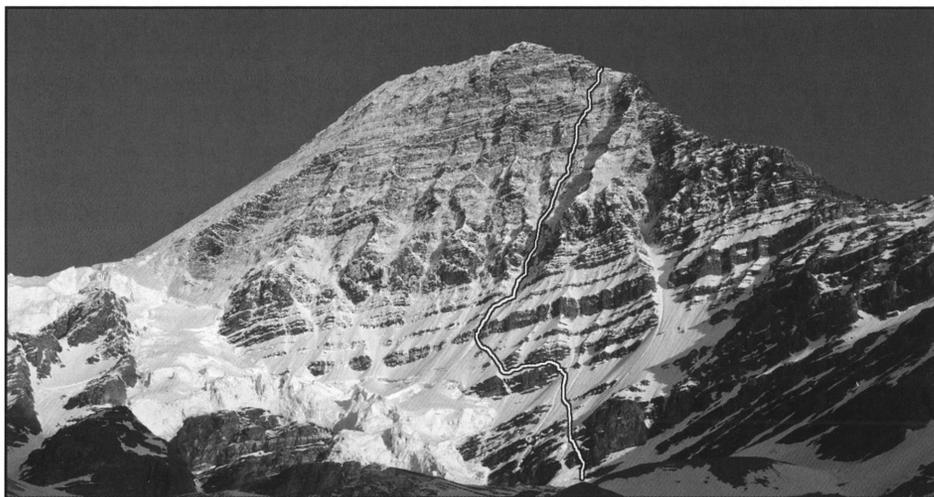
result, water-ice formation was spotty. Some areas, such as the classic Stanley Headwall, were unusually lean; however, other areas sported some fabulous ice lines. One of these was the intimidating east face of Howse Peak, which last winter made many people driving on the Icefields Parkway stop and stare. However, for whatever reason, it went unattempted. Perhaps the most significant new ice route of the season was completed, surprisingly, on May Day. Joshua Lavigne and Raphael Slawinski climbed Tsunami (300m, M5 WI5+) to the right of the classic (but unformed) Riptide on the northeast face of Mt. Patterson. The route started on scrappy alpine terrain, continued up steep ice, and finished through fortunately benign seracs to end on a glacial bench.

And there you have it, the past year in the grand Canadian Rockies in a nutshell. Perhaps the most remarkable thing about the past winter was the snowpack, which started out horribly unstable, and ended up being the best one in years. The exceptional coverage and stability allowed for a flurry of remarkable ski descents. But that is a different story.

RAPHAEL SLAWINSKI, *Canada, AAC*

Mt. Robson, Emperor Face, new climbing to Emperor Ridge. On Friday June 18, after deejaying the Test of Metal blockparty in Squamish, I hopped in my truck and drove ten hours through the night to meet JR in the Robson parking lot.

Earlier in the year I'd pulled a tendon pulley in my middle finger, and so ice tools were the first things I could reasonably grab. And so if alpine climbing was the only thing in condition for me, there was one guy I knew I needed to contact: Jon Walsh, a.k.a. Jonny Red (JR). He is my total hero. He has climbed the kinds of routes around the globe that people dream of climbing, and usually in an uncompromising, bold style—single push, fast, and free. His response was immediate and positive. At the top of his hit list was a face I had dreamt about since I was a kid: the storied Emperor Face of Mt. Robson. We didn't have to talk tactics for very long to realize we were on the same page. If we climbed fast with small packs, we would only need a couple of good days of weather. JR was adamant that any face in the



The new Kruk-Walsh line on Mt. Robson's Emperor Face, to the junction with the Emperor Ridge. See *AAJ* 2008, p. 184, for other routes on the face. *Jon Walsh*



Jon Walsh on the Emperor Face, with Berg Lake in the background. *Jason Kruk*

Rockies could be climbed in a weekend. “I’ve realized I can climb continuously for 48 hours before I need to sleep,” he said.

We hiked in quickly and established a camp below the face. It was the third time that spring we’d done the long hike (25km one way) in hopes of climbing the face, and the summer solstice seemed a ridiculous time to try to climb a “winter” route. But with a plump snow pack and a mild spring, conditions looked good. Early morning on June 20, we started climbing, and, despite the continuous, cerebral (read: scary) terrain, it was a pure pleasure to climb such entertaining and sustained mixed ground for so long. We climbed quickly, swinging leads the entire way up the face, the climbing never any easier than M5 or M6 and, often, stretching pitches up to 100m with simul-climbing. With a straight face I can call the hardest pitch I led M7. We hit the top of the face at midnight as lightning struck to the north, clouds enveloped around us, and light snow started to fall. At the time the decision to go down the Emperor Ridge, and not continue to the summit, seemed pretty easy. Now I can’t help but wonder “what if?”

It always seemed a little silly to argue over the very definitions we climbers make up ourselves. Summit or not, it definitely felt like a new route. In correspondence with a longtime Rockies climber, another hero of mine, his point was clear: “We’re not arguing black or white here, rather, different shades of ugly.”

JASON KRUK, *Canada*

BAFFIN ISLAND

Welshman’s Peak, Arctic Monkeys. Stu McAleese, Mark Thomas, and I (from Wales, U.K.) spent three weeks in May completing a new big-wall aid route on a previously unclimbed formation in