



AAC Publications

Mt. Evans, Black Wall, Undertow, first free ascent.

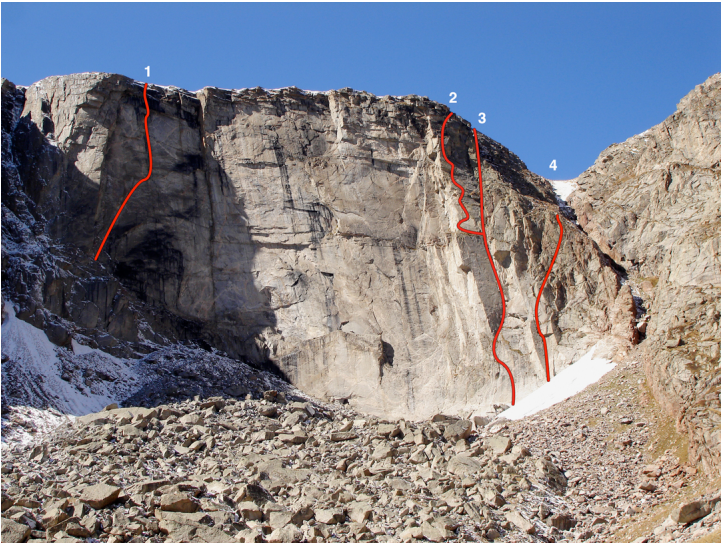
Colorado, Rocky Mountain National Park

In the spring of 2010, Will Butler took me to the Black Wall on Mt. Evans to show me the old aid line Undertow (IV 5.10 A4). When we rapped in, I couldn't believe this gorgeous dihedral system in the middle of the Black Wall had never been freed. The rock is stellar, the approach almost nonexistent, and the line seemed obvious. While we originally thought we would add some sort of bolted variation around the A4 roof, a more natural line presented itself. Later in the season, though, I realized why the climb was never freed: The alpine moss at the top of the wall acts like a sponge, dripping water down the final pitch.

After two seasons of cleaning the route, replacing bolts, and fighting wetness in the later part of the alpine season, I was finally able to free this amazing line with Brad Wilson on June 23, 2012, with both leader and follower freeing every pitch. The majority of the route follows the original aid line, except for a half-pitch that completely avoids the A4 roof traverse. Instead, the free variation follows a wide-hands layback out the other side of the roof, before cutting back underneath another massive roof to a spectacular hanging belay on the arête. Every pitch is high quality and very sustained, with at least four pitches clocking in at 5.11 or 5.11+ (6 pitches, IV 5.11+).

Shaun Reed

Images



The Black Wall with approximate lines of (1) Undertow, (2) Rainbow Highway, (3) Emerald Highway, (4) Ant Farm. The popular Good Evans is left of Undertow.



Reed leading Pitch 2 (5.11+)



Wilson fighting the pump on the Undertoad variation.



Reed excited to top out Pitch 6 on the FFA.



Wilson climbing Pitch 4 (5.9).



Wilson climbing a short roof on Pitch 4 (5.9).



Wilson cops a rest on Pitch 1 (5.11).



Wilson leading Pitch 5 (5.11+).



Brad Wilson below the roof where the aid line cuts left and the new “Undertoad” free variation cuts right.



Reed underclinging Pitch 3 (5.11).



Reed throws a heel hook on the steep end to Pitch 3 (5.11).



Reed laybacking on Pitch 2 (5.11+).



Wilson pulling the roof on the Undertoad variation.

Article Details

Author	Shaun Reed
Publication	AAJ
Volume	55
Issue	87
Page	142
Copyright Date	2013
Article Type	Climbs and expeditions