



AAC Publications

Colchuck Balanced Rock, west face, first winter ascent

Washington, Stuart Range

In late January 2012, Nathan Farr and I likely made the first winter ascent of the west face (300m, 5.11+) of Colchuck Balanced Rock (8,200') in the Stuart Range. We approached on skis for the first four miles, then followed a well-established boot-pack for four miles to Colchuck Lake. With potential avalanche concern, we eventually settled on the traditional summer option, which follows a steepening gully starting near the lake's southwest edge. We spent a cold evening nursing our flickering stove in the cirque below the face, and began climbing the next morning with one set of tools, one set of aiders, one set of jumars, and some oversized rock shoes. The route is generally very steep and features long sections of crack climbing. Even with gloved hands and big socks on, these pitches were fairly easy to lead. The most difficult moments came early on the climb, as the occasional easy mantel or 5.8 slab move (in summer) tended to be covered in sugar snow or verglas. The sun came out as we brushed snow off holds of the final slab pitch, illuminating Mt. Stuart and Dragontail Peak with orange winter light.

Blake Herrington, AAC

Images

Article Details

Author	Blake Herrington, AAC
Publication	AAJ
Volume	55
Issue	87
Page	119
Copyright Date	2013
Article Type	Climbs and expeditions