



AAC Publications

Liberty Cap, southwest face, Mahtah

California, Yosemite National Park

On May 31, Lucho Rivera and I began climbing the southwest face of Liberty Cap, ground-up, and succeeded in making the first free ascent of the formation. Our new route Mahtah (1,100', 16 pitches, 5.12+/5.13-), named for the Ahwahneechee word for Liberty Cap, is a long linkup that travels between three existing aid lines, as well as a bit of new ground.

We started climbing on the first two pitches of the Original Southwest Face (Faint-Harding-Rowell, AAJ 1970), then traversed right via a short bit of new ground to reach Bad Moon Rising (Allee-Boque-Mucci, AAJ 2013). (Mucci's report on Bad Moon Rising had been our inspiration for checking out the free-climbing potential on this face.) We then followed Bad Moon Rising for four difficult and sustained pitches up a corner comprised of immaculate stone. From there, we moved over to a wild and heinously pumpy roof pitch on the Direct Southwest Face (Braun-Cashner, AAJ 1983). We then left that route, climbing dead left for 50' to reach the 130-foot, horizontal "Crack of God" pitch on Bad Moon Rising. The Crack of God brought us back to the Original Southwest Face route, which we mostly followed, save for a couple small variations, to the top.

This is by far the best first ascent I have ever done, and I think it ranks as one of the best free routes in Yosemite Valley—a harder hardman's Astroman! Every pitch is spectacular, sustained, and improbable. There are five 5.12 pitches in a row once reaching Bad Moon Rising, and they are all very physical, with the final three in the upper end of 5.12. From there, you traverse the Crack of God—picture campusing sideways for nearly a rope length, with Nevada Falls booming below. After that pitch, the hard climbing is done but it's not over.

As for the grade of the climb, we are going to leave it open-ended and let repeaters give it a definitive grade—let's say it's somewhere between 1980s 5.12b and modern 5.13a. The real difficulty isn't in any particular pitch but in climbing it all back-to-back without your forearms exploding.

Images



Lucho Rivera following the Crack of God pitch.



The line of Mahtah on Liberty Cap.

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