



AAC Publications

Liberty Cap, southwest face, Scarface, first free ascent

California, Yosemite National Park

While perusing the 2013 AAJ I stumbled upon a line from Josh Mucci about the first ascent of Bad Moon Rising, "We have...had free climbing in mind while new-routing on Liberty Cap, as the lines are damn near built for classic free climbing." I reached out to Josh for direction before I settled on the route Scarface [AAJ 2011], and thus began the series of guessing games: *Would it all go?*

I fixed ropes, trundled loose rock, cleaned dirt, and worked on the pitches with various partners between February and March. Each contributed to the route, helping figure out sequences and push the route a pitch or two higher. Eventually, I redpointed six of the first seven pitches.

When I returned in April there was still prep work to do. I spent consecutive weekends drilling a few more bolts and working out the beta for the upper pitches. The southwest face of Liberty Cap is an oven, and the sun was starting to be a problem. James Ritt and I hiked up early in the morning on the last weekend of April and swung leads up the route. Despite my previous successes, I was unable to send either of the crux pitches. James saved the day when he followed the eighth pitch clean and proved Scarface would go free.

My fitness peaked again the first weekend in October, but the government had other plans, locking me out of Yosemite. On the last weekend of October I headed up for another round on Scarface. My friend Ben Steel was keen to help finish my dream. We split the difficulties with Ben leading the first crux (pitch 5, 5.12), and I the second (pitch 8, 5.12). We both fell off on our first attempts but redpointed them second-try, allowing us to top out on my yearlong project. [The free version of Scarface mostly follows the original aid line; however, significant variations to the original route were used on pitches 1–2 and 9–11.]

Images

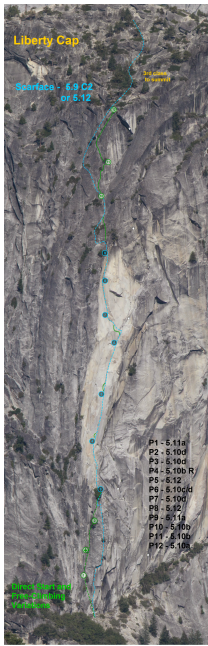
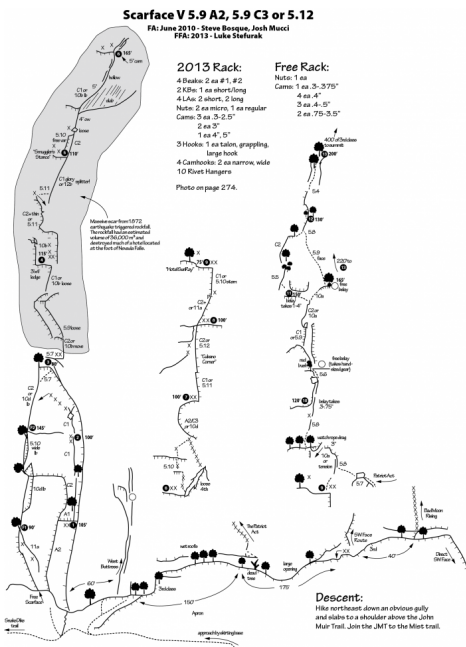


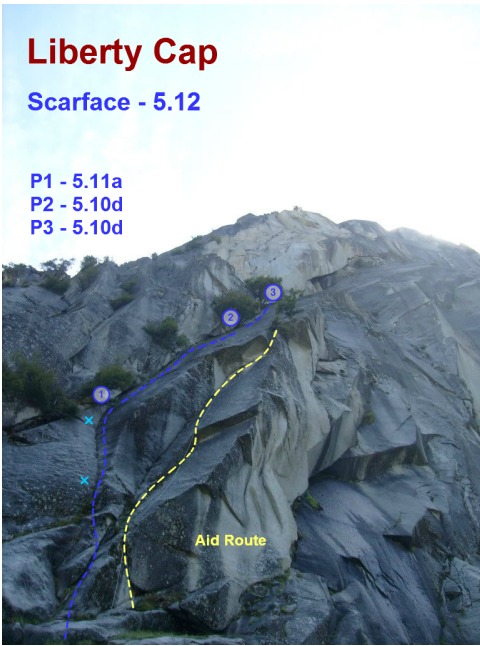
Photo topo of Scarface.



Detailed topo of Scarface.



Detailed photo top of Scarface, upper portion.



Detailed photo top of Scarface, lower portion.



Ben Steel leads the final 5.11 pitch, pitch 9



Steve follows the long second pitch.



James Ritt gets a key rest on the crux 8th pitch

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