



AAC Publications

Narsarmijit Valley and Torssuqatoq Spires, various routes; Semersoq Island, Punta Alboran

Greenland, South Greenland

During July and August, the three-member Spanish-Basque team of Txemari Andres, Vicente Castro, and Kepa Escribano added five new rock routes in the region of the Torssuqatoq Spires. Andres and Escribano flew to Narsarsuaq, where they met Castro in his own yacht. From here all three sailed to the coastal settlement of Narsarmijit (formerly Frederiksdal), and then made a four-hour walk north up the Narsarmijit Valley to a base camp at ca500m on the west side of the final lake. The very next day, July 30, all three reached the foot of the south-southwest face of Breakfast Spire [climbed earlier in the season by an American team] and climbed it in five hours to the west top. There was excellent crack climbing, with the main difficulties in the middle section of the wall. The 375m route, named Marmitako, was graded 6c A1. They descended ledges east of their ascent, then made eight rappels to the foot of the face.

The following morning, the three opted for an easily accessible spire on the ridge between Tikaguta (1,350m) and Navianarpoq. They climbed a 270m route up the east face in five hours, reaching a tower they dubbed Moskito Spire, and naming their route La Cuadrilla Pika Pika (6b+). Descent was straightforward by one rappel and downclimbing.

Their next objective was the big southeast face of Navianarpoq (reported by previous parties to be Greenlandic for "dangerous"). The mountain was first climbed in 1996 from the north (AD), and in the following year a British expedition added Steel Drum Idolatry (600m, E3 5c, Benson-Benson) and the Colour of Magic (750m, E2/3 5c, Cool-Powell) to the north face. The Spanish-Basque team started their climb at 6 a.m. on August 4, piecing together a line that was often wet in the lower section. They were caught by darkness one pitch below the summit, and spent a long, chilly night on a good ledge, before moving slowly to the top the following morning. They then made a complex descent of the previously unclimbed south ridge. The route was 735m long, completed in 35 hours camp-to-camp, and named Nunatak (7a A1).

On August 7 the three completed their next objective, a peak on the watershed ridge south of Breakfast Spire. The central section of the west face looked steep and hard, so in keeping with their "clean, fast, and no bolts" philosophy, they opted for a prominent slanting line on the right flank. Unexpected difficulties in the upper section of the face slowed progress, but they reached the summit after 10 hours, completing Urrezko Balea (515m of climbing, 6c+ A1). They named the summit El Katxalote. (Some summits on this ridge have been ascended in the past.)

Castro, concerned that strengthening wind might be driving sea ice into the harbor, went to look after the boat, while, on the 9th, Andres and Escribano set off for a new route on the wall to the left of Shepton Spire. Following a right-to-left-slanting line, they climbed for nine hours up the southeast face to reach the ridge at a summit, 150m higher than Shepton Spire, that they named Aiarpoq. They rappelled the route through the night, arriving tired and late at camp. The 545m line, which took 15 hours round-trip from the tents, was named El Diablo (6c).

On the 10th all three were back in the harbor. After sailing via Nanortalik, they reached the northern shores of Semersoq Island on August 15. Clearly visible north of Nanortalik, Semersoq (also spelled Sermersoq) has been well explored in the past, though only a few technical routes exist. The team established camp alongside a large glacier lake north of Half Dome (1,060m). In 2003 a six-person

British expedition had attempted the north ridge, noting Half Dome to be probably the finest remaining unclimbed peak on the island. There is no record of it being climbed since. [For a condensed history of climbing on this island see AAJ 2004.]

It took two hours on the 17th for the three to reach the foot of the east face, at which point Castro decided not to climb, but instead reconnoiter a feasible descent. Andres and Escribano climbed a continuous crack system directly to the summit in seven cold hours, naming their line Fisuras en la Niebla (300m, 7a). They returned to camp 13 hours after leaving. The British party that first named Half Dome did not make much progress in their attempt, so the Spanish felt justified in giving it a different name—Punta Alboran—after Castro's yacht.

Returning to Nanotarlik, Castro sailed back to Europe single-handed, while the other two took the more conventional flight home.

Lindsay Griffin, MountainINFO, from information provided by Kepa Escribano

Images



The superb jamming crack on the fifth pitch of Nunatak, on the southeast face of Navianarpoq.



On the first pitch of Half Dome/Punta Alboran.



El Diablo leading to Pt. Aiarpoq.



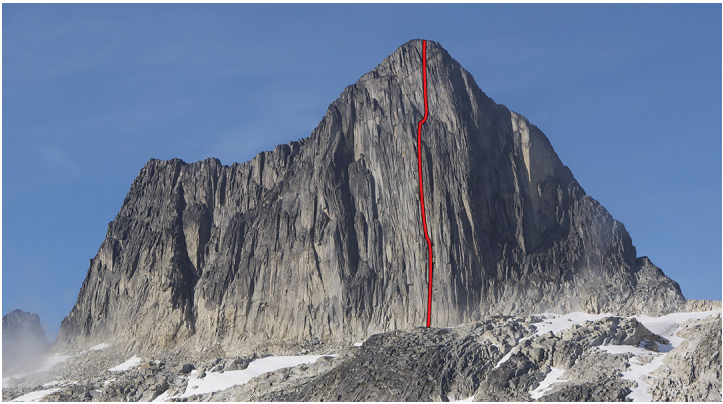
Urrezko Balea on the west face of El Katxalote. The top of Breakfast Spire is visible on the left.



La Cuadrilla Pika Pika on the east face of Moskito Spire.



Nunatak on the southeast face of Navianarpoq.



Half Dome/Punta Alborán from the east, showing the only existing route.

Article Details

Author	Lindsay Griffin
Publication	AAJ
Volume	56
Issue	88
Page	183
Copyright Date	2014
Article Type	Climbs and expeditions