



AAC Publications

Domo Blanco, southeast face, Super Domo

Argentina-Chile, Chaltén Massif

This year marked my eighth season of climbing in Patagonia. After spending three weeks further north attempting the east face of San Lorenzo, I arrived in El Chaltén December 10 to cold and snowy weather.

After not much climbing, a short but very cold weather window appeared the beginning of January 2014. The mountains remained icy but I had no interest in stepping into the conga line on one of the few ice climbs in the range. While looking at photos from the Manos y Más Manos traverse I did last year I saw a photo of the southeast face of Domo Blanco: Cutting across the face was a deep, unclimbed cleft with three distinct tiers. I instantly knew that was the objective.

After some rousing I got brothers Joel and Neil Kaufmann to commit. We left Niponino on January 2 at a somewhat casual 5 a.m. and by 8 a.m. we were at the base of the bergschrund, ready to go. I took the first block leading up moderate terrain of mostly névé with the occasional short step of water ice. We ran the rope out and simul-climbed the first section of in three fun pitches.

Joel took the lead up the second part, which started with an easy snow traverse leading to gradually steeper terrain. We probably simul-climbed close to 90m before Joel built a belay. This brought us to the base of a black dike and the mixed climbing crux. This great pitch led to a tricky rock traverse above that brought us deeper into the cleft. Finishing this second tier, we got a great view of the final tier (about 180m long). Up to this point the climbing had been incredible, but we now knew we were about to venture into some of the best climbing we'd ever done in Patagonia: The entire length was filled with perfect steep water-ice. We'd never seen anything like it in Patagonia.

Joel, being the most proficient ice climber, continued leading up this part. Two pitches of perfect WI4 deposited us at the base of the final 50m headwall, where the ice was iron-hard and blue-grey in color, and appearing to be hundreds of years old. Joel's now dull tools and crampons bounced off the vertical shield of ice many times before making purchase. However, we all had ear-to-ear grins on our faces knowing that we were in the process of picking one of the plumb lines left in Patagonia. Joel topped out the last pitch at around 7 p.m. and we all scurried the final couple hundred meters to the summit in strong winds. Though cold at the summit, we all felt the burning inside of having just completed one of the finest climbs in the range: Super Domo (500m, WI5 M5/6).

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Images



Joel Kaufmann leading a rock traverse to reach the icy cleft.



The lower part of the ice.



Joel Kaufmann leading the spectacular ice runnel on the upper part of Super Domo.



Enjoying thick blue water ice on Super Domo.

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