



AAC Publications

Nafees Cap, West Face

Pakistan, Charakusa Valley

What was going on? Odd-Roar was awakened by the sound of a slide coming from above. When the first ice blocks hit the portaledges, he threw himself into the wall, half on top of Ole, covering his head as best he could. A few anxious seconds later it was quiet again. A large block of ice had come through the fabric. Later he heard the story of “the last kiss” from Henki, 100m below. He and Sigurd had thought their last hour had come, and in the chaos made an intimate farewell. Before long they were all laughing, but the camp that they felt so sure was safe no longer seemed comfortable. They’d placed it at the lowest ledge on Nafees Cap, the large granite tower below K7. It was partially hidden under overhangs, though now they realized these were not as large as they’d imagined.

It was September, and Norwegians Henki Flatlandsmo, Sigurd Felde, Ole Ivar Lied, Jarle Kalland, Sindre Saether, and Odd-Roar Wiik were in the Karakoram, which only Felde had visited previously. With porters they had moved their gear from base camp to the foot of 900m-high Nafees Cap, fixing ropes to assist load carrying on difficult sections. This approach was hot and tiring and paradoxically coincided with the best weather of the trip, when ideal conditions would have been overcast and cold. Flatlandsmo, Felde, Lied, and Wiik worked on the large corner system attempted a number of years ago by Germans, while Kalland and Saether followed a line more to the right. The left-hand route gave nice aid, mostly A1-A2. The climbing was varied, needing everything from beaks to large cams, one pitch requiring Wiik to leapfrog Big Bros. However, cracks were filled with soil and vegetation. After climbing six pitches they placed their first portaledges camp 250m above the snow. Halfway up the wall they passed the German high point and continued up right, whereas in hindsight left would have been better. Their second camp was in an open dihedral and vulnerable to anything falling from above.

The weather became colder and more unstable, with rain every day. After 20 days and 22 pitches, up to A3, the four reached the top of the wall at midnight in a snowstorm. The gentle rock ridge to the summit was a non-issue, and they immediately began their descent. Rappelling proved demanding with four people hanging on each stance, sorting gear, surrounded by darkness and falling snow. However, by 5 a.m. they were back at the portaledges. Next day Ole removed four of the five ropes fixed above the camp, one having to be abandoned, as it was encased in ice and impossible to free.

After a day of sitting out the storm, they received a message over the satellite phone that the weather would be good the next day but bad again the day after, making getting off the wall the next day a priority. It was covered with ice, which peeled off in the sun and bombarded the climbers during their descent, but that night they reached base camp with most of their equipment.

Kalland and Saether spent six days on their line, climbing 20 pitches up to 5.11d and A2. The route, which involved many off-widths and chimneys that made hauling difficult, lay between the first Norwegian route and Naughty Daddies (630m, 5.12 or 7b, Adrian Laing-Jon Sedon, 2009, not to summit). The first route to climb Nafees Cap, following the right edge of the wall, was Ledgeaway to Heaven, put up in 2007 by Nico and Olivier Favresse, Adam Pustelnik, and Sean Villanueva (1,300m of climbing, 28 pitches, 5.12+). These four named the spire after their local guide/cook.

The Norwegians had a great if exhausting trip and to quote Wiik: “One thing for sure, I’m going back to Pakistan—a wonderful country with wonderful people, no matter what kind of impression the media and others may give.”

From information supplied by Henki Flatlandsmo and Odd-Roar Wiik, Norway

Editor's Note: Earlier in the summer Willi Oppenheim, Jake Tipton, and Ben Ventor, climbing in alpine style, got 14 pitches up a line to the left of the Norwegian four-man route. They made two bivouacs on ledges but retreated in heavy snowfall on their third day. On a previous attempt, this time in capsule style (and including a fourth member, Josh Beckner), they spent 10 days on the wall in mostly bad weather, making slow progress through heavy snowfall, before bailing a few hundred meters above the glacier.

Images



West face of Nafees Cap. K7 Central is pointed summit up left, while K7 Main is visible high on right. (1) Flatlandsmo-Felde-Lied-Wiik, 2011. (2) Kalland-Saether, 2011. (3) Naughty Daddies (Laing-Sedon, 2009, to high point a couple of pitches above junction with 4). (4) Ledgeway to Heaven (Favresse-Favresse-Pustelnik-Villanueva, 2007).



Ole Ivar Lied on pendulum, Nafees Cap.

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