



AAC Publications

Central Tower, Una Fina Linea de Locura (first capsule-style ascent)

Chile, Southern Patagonia, Torres Del Paine

From December 30, 2014–January 17, 2015, Myles Moser and I made the first capsule-style ascent of the route Una Fina Linea de Locura (31 pitches, VII 5.12 A3) on the Central Tower in Torres del Paine. Our goal was to free every pitch of the 4,000' mostly aid line in a continuous ascent, and we did a lot of free climbing (up to 5.12), however weather, time, and extreme difficulty eventually thwarted our free climbing goal. [Editor's note: Una Fina Linea de Locura (Calvo-Luro-Plaza, followed by Benedetti-Lloyd-Luro one week later, **AAJ 1994**) was originally graded 5.10 A3. It starts to the left of the 1974 South African route, which it crosses 250m up, and then climbs to the right of the South African route until joining the 1963 Bonington Route 200m from the top.]

The terrain from the base to pitch six was mostly 5.10—low angle but complicated. The weather looked stable when we began. Though it soon changed and left us hauling for hours in wet, sloppy snow. There's a good overhang for shelter atop pitch six, but we could only make it to pitch five on that first day. Hypothermia or rockfall, pick your poison! We stayed pinned down, with snow barreling onto our portaledge, hermits trapped in a drum. This would be the theme for our 19 days on the wall. During our assault, we climbed and hauled through blizzards of snow and rain, fought icy cracks and sub-zero temps, and battled the Patagonian winds. Of the three total days without precipitation, we spent one day hauling, one day descending, and one splitter, beautiful day on our summit push.

Our second camp came atop pitch 12, the Shattered Pillar. Above here, an incredible corner system stretches for 600'. We freed the initial A2 pitches at 5.12 to reach the dihedral. Our hopes were still high for an all-free ascent. From January 4–7 we sat pinned. On our 10th day, January 8, we packed and hauled in foul weather to bring our camp up under the monstrous dihedral that defines the route. We placed a buttonhead bolt, tied off a sketchy baby-angle, and settled in for what was to come. We'd already started cutting rations days earlier, knowing that 15 days of food would not be enough. Inevitably we talked about giving up on our dream of freeing the route and simply focusing on getting up the giant. As a direct translation the name of the route means, "A Fine Line of Insanity," which holds very true to the climbing, the weather, and our style of ascent.

Myles led the first of the aid pitches up the corner during intermittent flurries. Tied-off baby angles, short blades, thick blades—the seam only opened for a few millimeters. *Beaks!* Wished we had more of them. On this pitch alone Myles hammered for four hours straight to make 115' of progress. We continued this way, tapping our way up the dihedral, over a period of six days, with back-to-back A3/A4 pitches. During that time it snowed once for a 48-hour period. The snow that collected in the corner funneled down on us every minute. Eventually, we had to move up or risk being buried on our small ledge. We sunk another buttonhead midway up the flawless dihedral, only 200' higher than our last bivy. By day 16 we were finally able to turn an ominous roof capping the top of the corner. From there we climbed another two pitches (5.11 A2) and fixed our ropes for 500' down to our camp.

After getting pinned down by more bad weather, we set our alarm for 2:30 a.m. on the 17th day, hoping to complete a summit push. We went to bed hungry and anxious. Departing camp at around 4 a.m., we saw stars for the first time in 18 days—we knew this was our only chance. The summit lay 1,500' from our high camp. After jumaring hundreds of feet in the dark, we sat on a ledge to warm our frost-nipped feet and hands and get ready for the push. *The climbing was superb!* Golden granite, orange with crystals, and soaring cracks. The original description said the terrain would ease off here; instead, it was pitch after pitch of 5.11. After many pitches we finally intersected the Bonington-

Whillans route on the west-side shoulder and knew we were in the clear. The climbing turned into a romp, but was very icy and snow-filled, forcing us to stay roped up. We reached the *cumbre* late in the day. It was the most amazing view either of us had ever seen: snow-covered mountains with ice mushrooms, glaciers, and a panorama of big granite walls.

From the summit, we made 13 rappels back to our high camp, updating anchors as we went. We left four pitons, two nuts, and a lot of our slings. We shut our eyes and zipped our bags at 2 a.m., after almost a 24-hour summit push and cleanup job. The next day, we forced downward. After rappelling several pitches with our two 300' ropes, we discovered something that sent a chill down our spines: An entire pitch of the route had fallen off the wall while we were above it—which now explained a roar, a rumble, and a giant scar on the glacier. This rockfall took out several anchors, slicing bolts off the wall and obliterating pitons. It left powdered, loose granite behind. So close to the ground, and yet the tower still held us in its clutches! We made it to the bottom that night. Shovels and hands were required to dig out our ice axes, crampons, and baggage from the massive rockfall. Surely, we had realized our fine line of insanity!

We are happy to report that we removed over 1,500' of fixed line that has hung on the wall for many years, abandoned after the second ascent by a Chilean party. After this climb we made a free ascent of the Aste route on the South Tower, though it has surely been free climbed prior.

– Amy Ness, USA

Images



Free climbing high up on Una Fina Linea de Locura, Central Tower of Paine.



Amy Ness leading a splitter corner on the upper part of Una Fina Linea de Locura, Central Tower of Paine.



Amy Ness on the summit after climbing Una Fina Linea de Locura, Central Tower of Paine.



Myles Moser on the summit of the Central Tower of Paine.



Looking down the hard aid corner (mostly A3), Myles says, "Should have brought insulated boots!"



Amy Ness guns for the portaledge as the weather gets snowy.



Myles Moser posing beneath abandoned fixed lines. He and Amy Ness removed 1,500' of old fixed rope from the route.



Myles Moser stares up Una Fina Linea de Locura on the Central Tower of Paine. He and Amy Ness free climbed much of the route, up to 5.12, during their 19 days on the wall.

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