



AAC Publications

Yak Peak, South Face, CardiYak Rhythm

Canada, British Columbia

Anyone who has driven the Coquihalla Highway (#5), which runs beneath the south face of Yak Peak, just north of Hope, British Columbia, may know of its literary flare. The engineer of the complex series of bridges and tunnels through Coquihalla Canyon was an avid reader of Shakespeare, and it's said he would recite passages from the plays to his workers around the evening campfire. As a result, many places in the Coquihalla region are named after characters in Shakespearean literature. One route name we considered (although didn't land on) for our new route up the sweeping south face of Yak Peak was "The Twelfth Night." It felt especially poignant while driving home in the dark after our 12th and final long trip to complete the climb.

Yak Peak (2,039m) is the highest point along the Zopkios Ridge, which also includes Nak and Thar peaks. From the highway, Yak appears as a beautiful, clean slab of south-facing granite that steadily increases in steepness before the summit. It has been compared to the granite domes of Tuolumne Meadows in California.

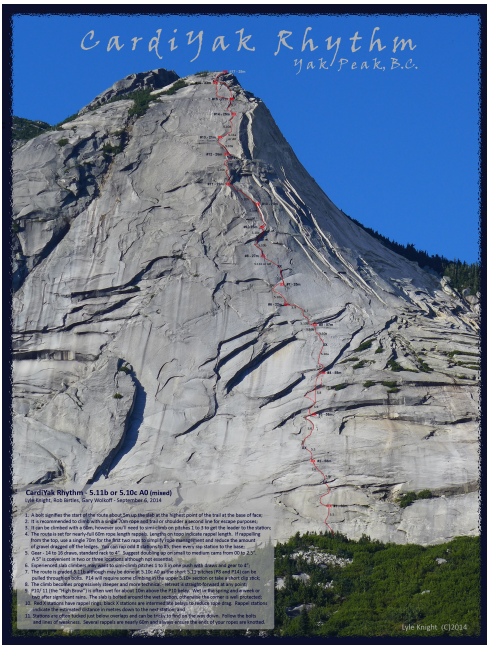
Rob Birtles and I began talking about new-route possibilities on Yak Peak three years ago, and of a ground-up versus top-down approach. Climbing the face ground-up would mean pioneering a line up the steep slabs, placing bolts at good stances and running it out in between. This has been the case with many routes on the face, and they now have serious runouts. A top-down approach would allow us to develop a safer route, providing intermediate climbers with access to a wide expanse of clean granite without having to commit life and limb. On the same face, Yak Crack (12 pitches, 5.9-) has multiple, loose, and run-out corners; Reality Check (13 pitches, 5.10+, Cox-Wolkoff, 1992) has an infamous and unnerving 35m runout on 5.10+ climbing—it has sent experienced climbers to the hospital. Not wanting to create a climb that risks life and limb, we chose a combination top-down/ground-up approach.

Rob and I started sussing out a line in August 2011, and we quickly installed 12 anchors along our route to facilitate quick escape, given Yak's unpredictable weather. I visited Yak Peak 12 times with Rob and/or Gary Wolkoff to complete the route. The first three and last three pitches of our 17-pitch route were climbed ground-up, as we were able to sufficiently bolt those sections on lead. The rest was established top-down, and we redpointed the harder pitches to figure out the best balance of gear and bolts.

On September 6, Rob, Gary, and I made a 12-hour push to the summit. CardiYak Rhythm (17 pitches, 5.11b) weaves a cunning line up the center of the south face of Yak Peak, between Reality Check and Hole In My Heaven. It links numerous clean corners and breaches a series of overlaps through gradually steepening terrain to the summit slabs. All the pitches have been redpointed, but the climb still awaits a true ground-up free ascent. The route can be climbed at 5.10c A0 and will provide ample adventure for climbers of widely varying skill levels—enjoy!

– Lyle Knight, Canada

Images



A detailed photo topo of CardiYak Rhythm (17 pitches, 5.11b), a new route on the pristine granite of Yak Peak's south face.



A very foreshortened but detailed photo topo of the upper 13 pitches of CardiYak Rhythm (17 pitches, 5.11b) on the south face of Yak Peak.



Gary Wolkoff leading pitch seven of CardiYak Rhythm.



Gary Wolkoff leads up a classic liebacking section on CardiYak Rhythm.

Article Details

Author	Lyle Knight
Publication	AAJ
Volume	57
Issue	89
Page	0
Copyright Date	2015
Article Type	Climbs and expeditions