



AAC Publications

Cherubim Dome, South Face, New Routes

California, High Sierra

Cherubim Dome (10,440') is a beautiful rock face towering above the Valhalla and Hamilton lakes, just east of Angel Wings. While researching its established rock climbs, I was able to find only one route, up the south-southwest face: Archangel (IV 5.10+ A0, Joe-Leversee, AAJ 1986). Of this route, E.C. Joe wrote, "Avoiding drilling as much as possible, we took a line up a series of flakes and cracks on the nearly featureless south face. Eight long pitches on superb golden granite." The south face, to the right of Archangel, seemed low-angle enough for another free route; however, I did not want to get on a featureless slab requiring hundreds of bolts. The dome is around 1,200' tall, and only eight bolts were placed on Archangel. I decided—not for all the right reasons—that I didn't want to place more than that.

The original line I proposed to Adam Ferro in August was an obvious white streak up the center of the south face—it was screaming to be climbed. But as we hiked up and examined the dome, it was obviously lacking crack systems. We opted for a line to the right, which seemed to have several connectable systems. We found perfect granite and fun climbing up featureless slabs, corners, knobs, and even laser-cut splitters that appeared from nowhere and ended just as abruptly. The line was as enjoyable as the south face of Charlotte Dome, but with less choss and scrambling. The climbing never got boring or too difficult, and we climbed many 60m pitches to the right edge of the summit headwall. A brief third-class scramble to the west took us to the top: Dark Angels Have More Fun (IV 5.9+ R).

While the route had difficulties to 5.9+, the climbing was usually in the 5.6 to 5.7 range. The runouts were sometimes long but not severe. The mental crux involved making 5.7 friction moves to a belay stance, 100' above the last protection. Climbing the entire route without placing a single bolt was a big confidence booster; it made me believe a line up the central white streak would be possible.

Cherubim Dome, showing the three known routes: (1) Archangel (IV 5.10+ A0, Joe-Leversee, AAJ 1986), approximate location. (2) What Dreams May Come (IV 5.10 R, Musiyenko-Prince, 2015). (3) Dark Angels Have More Fun (IV 5.9+ R, Ferro-Musiyenko, 2015).

A month later, I took a week off work and returned with Brian Prince. After a day hiking in, we went for the central white streak. Bulletproof granite with unique features allowed for several awesome pitches before we reached an obvious bulge. After delicate climbing up to the bulge, I found sloping jugs just right of the white streak that provided manageable climbing. On the following pitch, Brian climbed straight up the streak, gaining a thin crack with orange jugs to its right. After about 850' of climbing up the streak it morphed into an easy groove, so we traversed left and climbed straight up the middle of the summit headwall, which was very steep and intimidating. As with the rest of the route, things managed to work out better than expected. Awesome crack climbing over a few roofs took us straight to the summit proper. We called the route What Dreams May Come (IV 5.10 R). We placed a total of six bolts, with four for protection and two for a belay anchor.

The variety of climbing styles, immaculate rock, and views make both of these new routes on Cherubim Dome some of the best in the High Sierra. If you're going out to climb Angel Wings, add one to your list.

– Vitality Musiyenko

Images



Brian Prince belays below the final headwall on What Dreams May Come.



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Angel Wings (left) and Cherubim Dome (right).



Adam Ferro leading one of the upper pitches on Dark Angels Have More Fun.



Looking down a 100' runout on Dark Angels Have More Fun.



Looking down a splitter crack on Dark Angels Have More Fun.



Brian Prince leading the fourth pitch of What Dreams May Come.

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