



AAC Publications

Incredulous Bulk, West Face, Causative Striations

California, High Sierra

The Sierra was unseasonably warm in early October. With a few days at our disposal, Pete Fasoldt and I hiked up to the Incredible Hulk to find the usually crowded cliff, and indeed all of Little Slide Canyon, totally empty. Even the marmots were sleeping. We took advantage of the solitude to climb some classics and work out the moves on harder pitches.

Our second day ended early, so we wandered a half-mile down the canyon to check out an intriguing wall below the Hulk, located on the same (east) side of Little Slide Canyon. From our camp we followed a contour across the talus, staying above the large willow marsh in the main drainage below the Hulk. As we neared the base of the wall, we spotted an immaculate, overhanging thin-hands splitter begging to be climbed. Above, it appeared that other climbable features would see us to the top of the wall. The clean, established lines on the Hulk beckoned, but this splitter could not be ignored. We spent the remaining daylight hours scouting a good path between the main Hulk trail and the base of the wall.

Early the next morning we packed up camp below the Hulk and hiked down to the junction of the main trail and the marsh outlet, where we ditched our packs and bivy gear. Fifteen minutes later we reached the base of the splitter. The crack proved difficult right off the ground, but after breaking off a few crispy footholds I managed to free climb it at around 5.11-, reaching a good belay at a horn. Pete then dispatched a 5.10- thin crack in friable rock above the belay and continued up lower-angle terrain. A pitch of wandering 5.7 to a big ledge on the right side followed, then a pitch of tricky 5.10- jamming and laybacking to a belay off big cams. The short fifth pitch started up splitter hands and led to excellent 5.9 double cracks, then a small ledge belay. The sixth pitch started up 5.9 hands, and then we stepped right to a mellow offwidth, which brought us up to the blocky summit ridge, just below the small summit, which is protected by a 5.8 boulder problem. We each topped out in turn then downclimbed.

We rappelled 100' down the northeast face from a short piece of red cord that we threaded under a block just north of the summit proper. A nontechnical descent from the summit did not appear feasible, nor did descending the gully immediately south of the formation, which was choked with large, overhanging blocks. Once at the notch northeast of the summit, we traversed east over two gendarmes to reach a plateau. Although loose, this gendarme terrain is only fourth class and could be navigated without a rope. From the plateau, we easily skied game trails down the broad scree slope just south of the second gendarme and back to our packs.

We saw no sign of previous passage during our climb. However, Hulk aficionado Dave Nettle reported this formation had been climbed at least once before, in the early to mid-'90s, when Mike Davis and Hunter Sibald mistook it for the Hulk and climbed the large, right-facing corner system on the left side of the west face. Nettle said Davis and Sibald jokingly named it the "Hunk" or the "Bulk" after their accidental ascent. Although the shimmering white granite of the Hulk will always dominate Little Slide Canyon, we enjoyed our route Causative Striations (900', III 5.11-).

– Josh Finkelstein

Images



Looking up the first pitch of Causative Striations.



The west side of the Incredible Bulk, showing the approximate location of the Davis-Sibald route from the 1990s on the left and Causative Striations (900', III 5.11-, Fasoldt-Finkelstein, 2015) on the right.

Article Details

Author	Josh Finkelstein
Publication	AAJ
Volume	58
Issue	90
Page	0
Copyright Date	2016
Article Type	Climbs and expeditions