



AAC Publications

Golden Horn, East Face

Washington, North Cascades

On a Friday evening in June, Jason Schilling and I hiked in to explore the unclimbed east face of Golden Horn (8,366'), just north of Washington Pass on the eastern slope of the North Cascades.

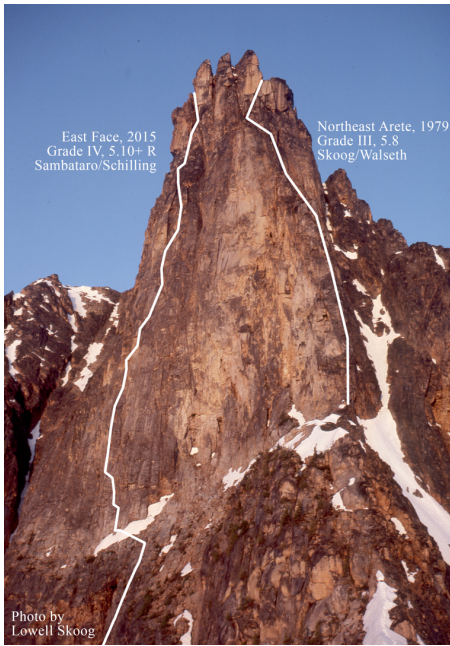
Fred Beckey and company made the first ascent of Golden Horn via the Southwest Route in 1946, then returned in 1958 to ascend the north face. Around the corner, Gordy Skoog and Jim Walseth climbed the Northeast Arête (III 5.8) in 1979. Gordy and his brothers, Carl and Lowell, returned with a film crew a year later to create an episode for KOMO-TV's Exploration Northwest, called "The Goldenhorn Pinnacle." Despite this colorful history, the peak's 1,000' east face had never seen an ascent, in part because it was rumored to be chossy. Eight years ago, I scrambled the Southwest Route with my wife, Arun, to sneak a peek for myself.

Jason and I approached up Swamp Creek to reach Snowy Lakes, a popular camp spot off the Pacific Crest Trail. The next day we scrambled up the ridge and dropped east via a snow couloir, a straightforward descent with crampons and axe. We hit our stride en route, and I enjoyed leading the route's technical 5.10+ third pitch, the crux, on good rock. The heat of the day hit us as Jason led the fourth pitch, which quickly turned into the day's true crux, an expanding crack with poor protection and disintegrating holds (5.10 R). We rationed our remaining water and navigated up intermittent cracks (5.8–5.10). We encountered one more loose section on pitch seven, and I worked hard to keep the rock together and sneak in some pro.

All in all, we free climbed the 11 pitches in 11 hours, onsight and without bolts or fixed protection. If, for some reason, other climbers are drawn to the golden morning glow of Golden Horn's east face, they should expect to encounter bands of both good rock and kitty litter. We dubbed the route Fuck the Pain Away (IV 5.10+ R), after a hilariously bad Peaches song.

– Joe Sambataro

Images



Golden Horn, showing Fuck the Pain Away (IV 5.10+ R) on the east face and the Northeast Arête (III 5.8).



Jason Schilling starting up the second pitch on good granite.



View of the east face of Golden Horn at sunrise.

Article Details

Author	Joe Sambataro
Publication	AAJ
Volume	58
Issue	90
Page	90
Copyright Date	2016
Article Type	Climbs and expeditions