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New Routes on Mt. Tuzo and Neptuak Mountain

Canada, Alberta, Canadian Rockies, Valley of the Ten Peaks

Between April 1 and 11, Canadian alpinist Marc-André Leclerc and I climbed three new routes in the Valley of the Ten Peaks. We had only recently tied in together for the first time, sharing a rope on March 27, when we climbed the Greenwood-Locke Route on the north face of Mt. Temple in a push, in quite wintery conditions. That climb went well and we worked well as a team, so I felt optimistic about doing more climbs together in the coming weeks.

We initially wanted to climb on the east face of Mt. Fay, near Moraine Lake, but warm temperatures and avalanches redirected us into the Valley of the Ten Peaks. We spotted a very nice and obvious line on the north face of Mt. Tuzo (3,248m). Our food and gas reserves were low after the disappearance of a food cache near Moraine Lake—apparently raided by an animal—but we were motivated by the promising line and started climbing around midday on April 1. The first three pitches were very serious. Steep, loose rock and some thin ice brought us to a huge chimney, where we spent our first night on the wall. We started the next day by literally digging our way up through enormous snow mushrooms. A few moderate mixed pitches followed, bringing us to the base of the ice, about halfway up the face. The first pitch of ice (WI6+ R) proved to be the hardest and the most dangerous. A few more moderate ice pitches followed before we found ourselves below a steep rock step. We climbed this in three pitches of very steep dry-tooling (M7+). On the second, and hardest, dry-tooling pitch, we had to remove our gloves for a few moves to crimp on small side pulls and edges. We finally settled in to our second bivouac after a very long day, beneath a final ice chimney, where we spent another night with almost no food and liquid.

The next day, we climbed to the top of Mt. Tuzo, completing our new route, which we elected to call, simply, the Lindič-Leclerc (1,100m, WI6+ R M7+). We descended to the col toward Mt. Deltaform and from there rappelled back to the north to return to our camp. During our descent we spotted a very good-looking ice line leading back up to this col. On the 8th of April, after a couple days of rest, we climbed the ice line we had seen during our descent of Mt. Tuzo in a push. The route proved to be fun and moderate, with some great climbing on thin ice. The difficulties were never very high, but the climbing was always interesting and relatively steep. We called our new route Fantastic Mr. Fox (500m, WI5 M5) in honor of the food cache that had disappeared earlier in the trip, which we suspected was stolen by a fox.

After a day of rest in our little base camp, we began our final route on the north face of Neptuak Mountain (3,241m). A steep, long line of ice on the upper part of the wall had motivated us to attempt this line, but the lower climbing turned out to be quite good as well. We climbed several superb mixed pitches of quality quartzite, with difficulties up to M7, before we started swinging our tools into perfect ice higher up. We didn't start our climb until noon, which is when the upper ice goes into the shade (making the line colder and safer). As a result, darkness fell when we were still on the steep ice, and we climbed the remainder of the route by headlamp. We reached the summit ridge around 1 a.m., and, an hour or so later, stood on top of Neptuak. We descended the west flank of the mountain and finally reached our base camp with the first morning light. We named our route the Psychological Effect (700m, WI5+ M7).

Of the routes that we climbed, the one on Mt. Tuzo is certainly the most serious, and the one on Neptuak Mountain offers the best climbing. To repeat the Lindič-Leclerc Route or Psychological

Effect, one should bring a set of cams (from tiny to number 3), a set of nuts, about 8 ice screws (including a few short ones), 3–5 different pitons, and 2–3 Peckers. To repeat the Fantastic Mr. Fox, one should be fine with around 8–10 screws (including a few short ones) and a small set of cams and nuts.

Luka Lindič, Slovenia

Images



Marc-André Leclerc on the second pitch of the Lindič-Leclerc Route (1,100m, WI6+ R M7+) on Mt. Tuzo.



Marc-André Leclerc begins a difficult mixed lead on Mt. Tuzo, with an ice tool as his first piece of protection.



Summit selfie of Marc-André Leclerc and Luka Lindič on top of Mt. Tuzo.



Marc-André Leclerc enjoying the thin ice typical of the climbing on Fantastic Mr. Fox (500m, WI M5).



Marc-André Leclerc climbing a cool chimney on the lower part of the Psychological Effect (700m, WI5+ M7) on Neptuak Mountain.



Marc-André Leclerc headed up steep mixed terrain on the Psychological Effect (700m, WI5+ M7) on Neptuak Mountain.



The line of Fantastic Mr. Fox (500m, WI5 M5), which climbs to the Tuzo-Deltaform col.



The route line of the Psychological Effect (700m, WI5+ M7) on Neptuak Mountain.



The line of the Lindič-Leclerc Route (1,100m, WI6+ R M7+) on Mt. Tuzo.



Valley of the Ten Peaks

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