



AAC Publications

Siulá Grande, East Face, Attempts

Peru, Cordillera Huayhuash

IN LATE JULY, Tito Arosio, Matteo Bernasconi, and I traveled to the Cordillera Huayhuash with high hopes of climbing the impressive limestone wall in the center of the east face of Siulá Grande (6,344m). We had a little information about the place from Max Bonniot, who did the first ascent of the east face the year before with Didier Jourdain, via a line up the east pillar (AAJ 2017), and from previous expeditions of the Ragni di Lecco of Italy.

In the first days of August, after establishing base camp at Laguna Siulá (4,300m), we started to explore options for approaching our objective, which rises in a high cirque above a large and steep icefall. The only viable option was to approach the main wall from the right, by climbing some easier terrain and then crossing the high plateau of the glacier.

On August 11 we left base camp and climbed 500m of moderate terrain on rock (up to 5c), plus two short ice pitches on seracs, before reaching the upper part of the glacier. [This line is on the flanks of Jurau B (ca 5,740m); this formation was mistakenly labeled Siulá Antecima in the print edition of AAJ 2018.] Now we could see it would be too dangerous to approach the main face from this point, because of the terrible condition of the glacier. Therefore, the following day we attempted to climb a snowy ridge on the right, hoping to traverse up the ridge all the way to the rock wall. Unfortunately, after about 150m, we got shut down by long sections of inconsistent steep snow. We returned the same evening to base camp.

Given that the only possible solution we'd found for approaching the central wall didn't work out, we changed plans and decided to attempt an independent line on the east pillar climbed by Bonniot and Jourdain in 2016, with the idea of following their same line up the upper mixed part to the summit. [The Italians' attempt began well to the left of the French line from 2016.]

On August 18 we left base camp again and climbed the first 200m of the pillar with difficulties up to 6a. After a good bivy, the following day we climbed some 200m of really compact limestone. The quality of the rock was really amazing, but the natural protection opportunities definitely were poor. Luckily, when the wall began to steepen, we joined a perfect ice runnel that led to a good bivy ledge. That afternoon the weather started to change, and so we looked to the easiest line for continuing. We moved right and joined the French route, continuing to the base of their crux rock pitch (6c), from which we fixed our two climbing ropes and rappelled to the ledge to bivy.

Up to that point we had climbed 550m to 600m, with difficulties up to 6c and WI4+. The next morning we woke up under 20 cm of fresh snow, and given that the weather forecast was bad for the following days, I went up to get the ropes and we decided to retreat. After this attempt, we didn't have enough time for another try.

What I can say about this little portion of the Cordillera Huayhuash is that the limestone is something incredible: extremely solid, sharp, and compact, similar to what you find in the Rätikon or Wendenstöcke. The main wall in the center of the east face of Siulá Grande is a challenge with top-notch technical difficulties on rock, plus a complex and committing approach, and surely will make for a fully intense alpine adventure.

– **Matteo Della Bordella**, Ragni di Lecco, Italy

Images



Siulá Grande (6,344m) from the east, showing the two Italian attempts in 2017. Their primary goal was to reach the large, unclimbed rock wall in the center of the face. Because of the dangerous icefall, they attempted to approach the wall by climbing moderate ground on the flanks of Jurau B (ca 5,740m). Bad conditions eventually forced a retreat from the upper glacier. The 2017 team then attempted a new line on the east pillar, first climbed in 2016 by Max Bonniot and Didier Jourdain. The Italians followed a line to the left of the French ascent for about 550m before a snowstorm ended their attempt.

Article Details

Author	Matteo Della Bordella
Publication	AAJ
Volume	60
Issue	92
Page	0
Copyright Date	2018
Article Type	Climbs and expeditions