



## AAC Publications

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### Disappointment Peak, Kim Schmitz Memorial Route

Wyoming, Tetons

**I had the idea to put up a route in honor of Kim Schmitz well before he died.** I would often spot him around Jackson at climbing events, films, and competitions in which he could no longer compete. Only a few of us knew that the old guy watching the comp possessed more skill than anyone climbing on the boulders. I thought it would be great to actually honor a climbing legend before he died, and I already had a line in mind on the southwest face of Disappointment Peak above Garnet Canyon. However, I had the toughest time thinking of a suitable name.

Many of the obvious lines in the Tetons were climbed long ago. However, the range is by no means climbed out. If anything, the real adventure has just begun. New routes can no longer follow the path of least resistance or trace a weakness from bottom to top. The frontier now lies out on the faces and up the *direttissimas*. In order to establish these routes, climbers will need to change their perspective of what is possible.

The new route on Disappointment Peak starts to the left and uphill of the Whiton-Wiggins (II 5.9, 1981) and to the right of West Side Story (II 5.8, Hadley-Montopoli, 1977) and follows a prominent buttress between those two routes the entire way. The intention was to do this route in impeccable style, and the first attempt with Adam Fabricant started ground up, free, and onsight. We encountered difficult and poorly protected climbing right off the ground. During this attempt, I got more than halfway up pitch four, the "Big Flake Pitch," to a smaller but much looser flake looming above me. Since the first rule of climbing is not to kill yourself, and the second rule is not to kill your partners, our attempt ended there. Our ideal style also ended there, because the only way the route would go is if we knocked off the death flake from above.

On the second attempt, Adam and I rappelled down the route off nut and pin anchors to launch the death flake. Even after seeing the upper wall, I had no idea if it would go. Climbing from the ground that day, darkness found us three pitches from the top. I was 15 feet left and level with my last gear, looking up at a blank arête, and not knowing what was around the corner. We escaped right and up the Whiton-Wiggins in the dark.

When I woke at 4 a.m. on the day of the final attempt in September 2016, I had one text on my phone. It was the news of Kim's death the day before. Unfortunately, now we had a route name.

Returning this time with Sam Macke, I re-led the first pitch (5.11d), which was mentally harder the second time because I knew how scary it would be. I think a bolt or two on this pitch would be appropriate in the future. Luckily, this pitch can be bypassed by climbing ledges uphill (left) of the start of the route. The second pitch was also sketchy when I freed it the first time—hard climbing with difficult protection and ledge-fall potential. We had intended to lead in blocks, but I suggested to Sam that he should take this pitch since I'd already done it. However, with rule number 2 in mind, I first aided up the pitch and preplaced some critical gear for his lead. We left some protection in place, and this started a trend of leaving critical nuts, pins, and even a Pecker on the route for future ascents.

The only other pitch that required aid was the arête that had previously shut Adam and me down. After aiding to a belay around the corner, we pulled the ropes and freed the pitch at 5.11c. This pitch was the key to the route and puts you in an amazing position on the upper headwall. A pitch of 5.10 R up this headwall led to a 4th-class pitch to the top.

The Kim Schmitz Memorial Route [1,000', IV 5.11d (5.10c R)] is an adventurous line up the most prominent part of the buttress. It's a little dangerous and requires a commitment to cast off into the unknown well above the gear. Like Kim, it doesn't take the easy path.

– Michael Abbey

## Images



The southwest face of Disappointment Peak in the Tetons, showing the line of the Kim Schmitz Memorial Route (1,000', IV 5.11d). The route took three attempts and was completed the day after Schmitz' death in September 2016.



The traverse around the arête on pitch 6 (5.11c). Middle Teton in the background.

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