



AAC Publications

Yosemite Valley, Various Activity

California, Yosemite National Park

El Cap continued to see considerable free climbing attention this year from an international cast. In the fall, Barbara Zangerl (Austria) and Jacopo Larcher (Italy) returned to make the second free ascent of Magic Mushroom (VI 5.14a) in an 11-day push, while Hazel Findlay (U.K.) completed her fourth free route on the Captain with her send of the Salathé Wall (VI 5.13b). Keita Kurakama (Japan) made a near free repeat of the Nose (VI 5.14a), sending all of the pitches but returning to the ground for three days between the Great Roof and the Changing Corners. In late October, Brad Gobright and Jim Reynolds snagged a new Nose speed record in 2:19:44, shaving nearly four minutes off of Hans Florine and Alex Honnold's 2012 time.

Nico Favresse (Belgium), with Alix Morris and Drew Smith, climbed Eye of Sauron (400 m, 8 pitches, 5.13 a/b), a spectacular and difficult new trad line that climbs through a large cave of dark stone just to the right of Ribbon Falls. Three pitches of moderate terrain up to 5.10 lead to the crux pitch—an overhanging elevator shaft out the roof of the cave that features three-dimensional climbing, thin liebacking and splitter hand jamming for 40 meters. Three pitches of steep 5.11 hero climbing with many variations lead to a final 5.9 pitch on a ridgeline. The route was done ground-up over two days without bolts. Equalized, two-nut anchors were placed for rappelling.

In May, after a recon with Patrick Warren, Bob Jensen and Josie McKee completed a free variation to Hail to the Chief (11 pitches, V 5.9 A3 R, Bosque-DeWeese, 2016) on Lower Cathedral Spire called Long Live the Chief (10 pitches, 5.11 PG-13). The route climbs the first seven pitches of Hail to the Chief before branching off left, and climbs and frees a portion of the Upper North Face (IV 5.9 A3, MacDonald-Rowell, 1962).

While Steve Bosque and Kevin DeWeese were working on the FA of Hail to the Chief in 2016, they spotted a line on Higher Cathedral Rock that they finished in June 2017 and called Generation Gap (5.9 A3). Cameron Burns joined the two for the upper pitches. The route starts on the first pitch of Wild Apes (5.9 A3, 2001) then heads back left and follows a sister system to the right of Learning To Crawl (5.9 A3, 1985) before connecting to the last two pitches of Northeast Buttress. They suspect the route could go free with variations.

Vitaliy Musiyenko and Chris Koppl climbed two big new routes in Tenaya Canyon: Cavity Dweller (VI 5.11- C4) on the steep southeast face of Mt. Watkins, and Semper Farcisimus (IV 5.11) on Harding Tower (Musiyenko and Mark Westman made the first ascent of this slabby dome between Mt. Watkins and Yasoo Dome in 2016, see AAJ 2017).

On Harding Tower, the two reported great slab climbing with intermittent cracks and flakes and zero loose rock. A bouldery entrance into the "Going in Dry Chimney" was the crux at around 5.11b, but could be easily aided to make the route no harder than 5.10.

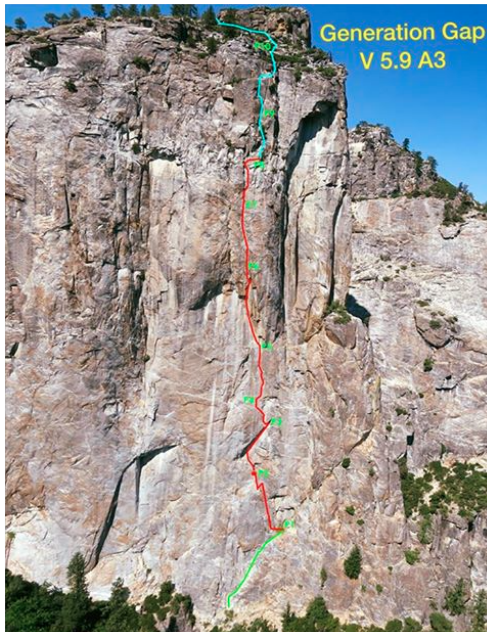
Over four days in early September the two returned and started up Mt. Watkins' steep southeast face using a mix of direct aid and free climbing with difficulties to 5.10+/5.11. The route features extensive hooking, and blown placements resulted in several 50-foot whippers. This was the first grade VI first ascent in Yosemite for both Koppl and Musiyenko, and though they hoped it would be a start of a long free climbing project, they reported the line will unlikely go free.

– **Andy Anderson**, compiled from various sources

Images



Nico Favresse on the crux pitch of Eye of Sauron (400 m, 8 pitches, 5.13 a/b), a spectacular and difficult new trad line that climbs through a large cave of dark stone just to the right of Ribbon Falls.



Generation Gap (Bosque-DeWeese, with Cameron Burns) on Higher Cathedral Rock.

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