



AAC Publications

Beatrice, Southeast Face, The Excellent Adventure, Free Ascent and Completion to Summit

Pakistan, Karakoram, Masherbrum Range

Ryo Masumoto and Yusuke Sato traveled to the Charakusa Valley with the goal of free climbing a big wall in capsule style. During acclimatization and reconnaissance, their attentions were drawn to the sheer 750m southeast face of Beatrice (ca 5,800m) and to a single crack that rose from partway up the wall directly to the summit area. With alpine equipment for the summit and only a single prominent snow patch low on the wall, requiring them to add large amounts of water to their bags, their load weighed about 100kg. The aim was to try and on sight as much as possible on sight, climb (and clean) the rest on aid, and then work on the redpoint.

The pair started on August 1, with Sato aiding the first wet pitch before free climbing it. After another night at their advanced base on the glacier, the two jumared their fixed rope and climbed two more pitches, after which they discovered a bolt. This came as a bit of a shock, as they were unaware the line had been climbed.

In fact there were three existing routes on this wall, all thought to be unrepeatable before 2017. In 1997 two British teams (Grant Farquar, Steve Meyers, and Mike "Twid" Turner, and Glenda Huxter, Kath Pyke, and Louise Thomas) climbed almost independent lines on the face, both sharing a common approach to the snow patch 100m up. From there, the three women headed up left to create Hatija (VI E3 6a A3+), while the men continued directly up the continuous crack line to complete the Excellent Adventure (also VI E3 6a A3+). Both teams climbed to the top of the wall, but neither went to the summit. Two years later, Jimmy Chin, Evan Howe, and Doug Workman (USA) climbed a third route, farther to the right, which they named Wanderlust (VI 5.10+ A3). The Americans also decided to forgo the summit, which was well guarded by snow-covered loose blocks. No team climbing the southeast face had yet reached the top of the peak.

On day four the two Japanese reached the large snow patch, where they established a portaledge camp. Above lay the main crack system. That day they climbed and cleaned two difficult pitches in the crack, largely on aid, before returning to the portaledge for the night. Over the next two days the pair climbed through very steep ground, part free, part aid, to reach somewhat easier terrain, where about half a dozen more reasonable jamming pitches led to the summit ridge. They followed this ridge over poor rock and loose snow to the highest point.

During the descent to the portaledge, they spent more time cleaning various sections of the route. Then, over days seven and eight, they freed the remaining pitches, despite some sections of persistent wetness. Sato led the crux 10th pitch at 5.13a. On August 9 they stripped their ropes and returned to advanced base.

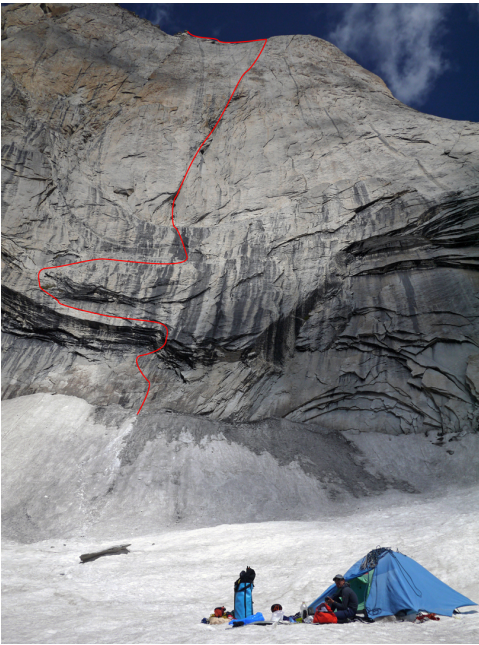
Pitch grades follow (certain pitches would probably be easier when dry). P1, 40m, climbed first at A1+, then redpointed at 5.11b, wet in parts. P2, 60m, 5.10a, fragile in parts. P3, 55m, 5.10b, difficult wet slab. P4, 40m, C1, then 5.11a. P5, 20m, C2 then 5.12a. P6, 30m, C2 then 5.12b. P7, 50m, C2 then 5.12a, a fine varied pitch. P8, 15m, 5.10d. P9, 30m, 5.12b, painful laybacking and a difficult mantel. P10, 30m, C2 then 5.13a (110°). P11, 50m, 5.12c, damp and hard. P12, 50m, 5.11a, damp. P13, 60m, 5.11c. P14, 60m, 5.9. P15, 50m, 5.10a. P16, 30m, 5.10a. P17, 55m, 5.9. P18, 20m, 5.9. P19, 45m, 5.10c. P20, 70m, unstable snow and rock ridge.

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Images



The southeast face of Beatrice (ca 5,800m). (1) Diaper Couloir (1988, first ascent of the peak). (2) Hatija (1997). (3) The Excellent Adventure (1997, FFA 2017). (4) Wanderlust (1999). See also photo in AAJ 2000.



The southeast face of Beatrice (ca 5,800m) from advanced base on the glacier. The Excellent Adventure is marked.



Yusuke Sato leading the crux pitch ten during the first free ascent of the Excellent Adventure (20 pitches, 5.13a). This 5.13a pitch overhangs the vertical by 20°.



Yusuke Sato on the loose summit ridge of Beatrice. Masumoto and Sato were the first climbers to reach the summit of Beatrice via the southeast face.

Article Details

Author	Lindsay Griffin
Publication	AAJ
Volume	60
Issue	92
Page	283
Copyright Date	2018
Article Type	Climbs and expeditions