



AAC Publications

Tamarack Lake Area, New Routes

California, Sequoia National Park

In August, Jake Smith and I headed into the Sierra, planning to join friends at Tamarack Lake in the Lone Pine Creek drainage below Mt. Stewart (12,205'), keep our options opened, and climb whatever looked good. After the 16-mile march in to camp, the first thing that looked good was Tamarack Lake and a direct line into it.

Thirty minutes into the rest and rehydration process, I regained my senses, especially after I saw crack systems snaking up the northwest face of Mt. Stewart through our friend Ney's binos. After a little mule-delivered wine, Jake and I even regained our confidence and got psyched to climb. The prominent route up the face is Fallen Angel (IV 5.10+, Nettle-Pennings, 2001), which sounded like a good choice until we saw a pitch on the topo dubbed the Sleeping Bag Simulator. Claustrophobia kicked in and I demanded we find hand cracks. Next morning we woke up with enough post-hike aches to resist the urge to find out what the Sleeping Bag Simulator was all about. Strong coffee and heavy metal got us to the base, where there appeared to be more enjoyable ways up the face.

After finding and scrambling up the most perfect 4th-class hand crack imaginable, we set up a belay and Jake set off on the first lead, where he found a pleasant undercling roof and a hand crack that continued on. I diverged into a beautiful finger crack over another overhang and a triple cracks that took us to more of the same. In six pitches of swinging leads we encountered all sizes of splitter cracks and dihedrals, with no wide climbing necessary. After I cranked through a perfect 5.11 splitter finger crack one would expect to see in the Needles on our seventh pitch, I couldn't believe our luck, yet I also realized the wall was much taller than the 1,000' we'd expected to climb and we should have started the approach much earlier!

From there, offset micro nuts protected difficult moves in a laser cut seam off the belay. The moves did not get easier and the seam did not grow into a finger crack as desired. It was only an illusion created by a shadow we'd seen from below. After some lagging and a "watch me" after every third move, I made it to an intimidating roof without a slip. I cleaned out a few small placements below and convinced myself this roof could be climbed, and indeed the moves over the obstacle turned out easier than anticipated. A nice crack above led to a well-protected gymnastic boulder problem and another corner crack.

Nine 60m rope stretchers into the climb, the exposure and the views were more beautiful than we could have imagined. The sun was setting behind a cloud of dark smoke over the Central Valley and the wall was glowing orange. On the last pitch I sank my hands into a slightly overhanging number 1 and 2 Camelot hand crack that dropped me off on the summit. I wondered if somehow I was still dreaming. We called it the Antichrist Dihedral (1,600', 5.11b).

The descent down the west ridge was complicated by headlamp. What would likely take a few minutes in daylight seemingly took forever in the dark. We stumbled into camp sometime after 2 a.m.

A few days later, after our friends Betty and Ney Grant made the first known ascent of a large southwest-facing wall dubbed the Shield via their route Stonehenge (1,000', 5.10a, see Mountain Project for details), Jake and I had a lazy morning and then dragged ourselves over to the base to

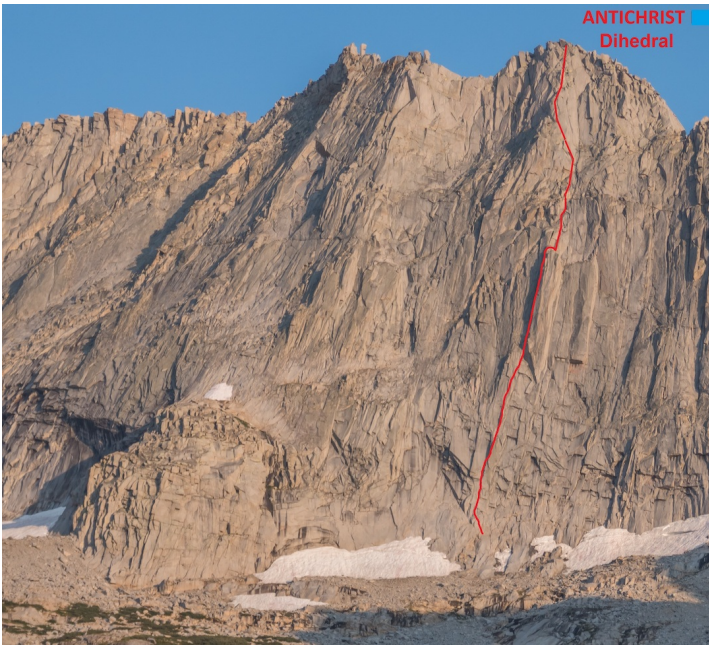
either repeat their climb or climb something different. We saw a nice set of right-facing dihedrals with flakes, knobs, and cracks that seemed to connect features to the left of Stonehenge. The line looked fairly hard from the base. To our surprise, we found fun and moderate climbing, similar to routes on the neighboring Prism, all the way to the top. An incoming storm chased us off the top, and we dubbed our line of ascent the Lightning Bolt Cracks (1,000', 5.9), as we saw many of them flashing in the distance.

The following day, our plan was to tackle the smaller yet more imposing formation to the left of the Globe, which Brian Prince and I had climbed in 2015 (see AAJ 2016). It was likely still unclimbed, and I wanted to see if the proud southeast prow had a line. By the time we got to the base of this unusual red rock formation, we noticed clouds building up in the distance. We hurried to get on the wall and encountered very good climbing up corner cracks and featured face. The climb mostly takes natural gear, yet we had to place some bolts. We found the crux of the route on the third pitch—a bolt-protected, powerful sequence that went at 5.12b. At this point we were scared off by flashes of lightning and epic-looking clouds that were quickly approaching, yet by the time we got down, only a few drops of rain had fallen and the dark clouds began to clear.

We returned the following day and climbed this truly awesome route from the bottom to the top. Above the crux were more fun cracks, big chicken heads, and an exposed summit. The crux can be aided easily, and the rest goes free with cruxes at easy 5.11. The Red Rocket seemed like an appropriate name for the formation, and we dubbed our route the Cool Beans (750', 5 pitches, III 5.12b), as we used the expression quite often and literally found some cool bean-like chicken heads near the summit.

– Vitaliy Musiyenko

Images



The northwest face of Mt. Stewart (12,205') in Sequoia National Park, showing the line of the Antichrist Dihedral (1,600', IV 5.11b). This was one of three new routes Vitaliy Musiyenko and Jake Smith completed in the area during a week-long trip in August 2018.



The Red Rocket, one of two south-facing domes on the ridgeline north of Tamarack Lake in Sequoia National Park. The line of Cool Beans (750', 5 pitches, III 5.12b) is shown. To the right of this formation is the Globe, first climbed by Vitaliy Musiyenko and Brian Prince in 2015.



Jake Smith climbing the featured red stone found on the Red Rocket during the first ascent of Cool Beans (750', 5 pitches, III 5.12b). This was one of three new routes Smith and Vitaliy Musiyenko completed during a week-long trip to Tamarack Lake in August 2018.



Jake Smith on the crux pitch of Cool Beans (750', 5 pitches, III 5.12b), one of three new routes he and Vitaliy Musiyenko completed during a week-long trip to Tamarack Lake in August 2018.

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