



## AAC Publications

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### **Icefalls below Huayna Potosí**

Bolivia, Cordillera Real

**During one of my semi-conscious moments on the bus ride toward the Zongo Pass in July 2018, I had noticed some ice on the lower hanging cliffs below Huayna Potosí.** Being an ice climber out of Bozeman, and not a rugged mountaineer like my counterpart Matt Ward, these smears were rather attractive. Once we had settled into the attic of the hostel (high-paying guests stayed downstairs), we loaded up ice gear and went for a walk. That's when I started losing the stoke. Hiking at 4,900m isn't the convenient Hyalite Canyon approach I am used to, and it really took its toll, especially after only five days of acclimatization.

Eventually, though, we got to the base of the first icefall we had seen from the road. We were impressed: It was a decent size with a short pillar in the middle. I attempted the lead, but fear and not being able to breathe left me bailing from an ice screw and leaving it for my bold leader to finish, which he did with style. We dubbed the climb Attic Boys (25m, WI5).

After my first failed attempt, I was sure I had it in me to recharge and make something happen. We rounded the corner from Attic Boys and found ourselves staring at a mushroomy 30m climb. From the road this hadn't looked in condition, but on closer inspection we noticed a lot more ice behind some rock. I tied in, turned on my headphones, and went for it. The bottom section, which appeared WI3, was more of a WI4 hollow ice mushroom. This didn't sit well with me so, again, I tucked my tail and retreated. Luckily Matt was raring to go, though not without some butterflies. About two-thirds up he encountered the scariest ice we had seen to date, an overhanging curtain that got thinner the further out you went. It took no protection other than a Pecker we left in the rock on the left before topping out. I followed, congratulated Matt on an excellent lead, and thanked him for leaving me some ice to climb. We called it Montezuma's Revenge (WI6 R).

That night, while sliding back to our attic nook, we came across a man whose name we recognized. Robert Rauch seemed to be more curious about what we were up to than about the clients he was guiding. Apparently, there was noise that the "attic boys" had been climbing the lower cliffs. Robert had also been interested in that ice and mentioned that nobody had ever climbed it, nor had he ever seen ice form there. He explained that the area had been closed until 15 years ago due to mining restrictions. After more food and stories we decided to invite Robert along in the morning, when we would scout the third and final piece of ice we had seen.

It took one and a half hours to reach the base of the route. A long WI3 flow led to the base of a skinny pillar of ice that barely touched down. Above this lay potentially classic WI5. All we needed to do was figure out how to avoid that nasty pillar. As usual, Matt came to the rescue with a fun looking M5 variation that led to better ice. He led like a boss to the top of the pitch and then belayed me. I led through for 30m of unprotected moderate climbing to a boulder field, where I slung a chockstone and rappelled. We named the route Pelea de Perros Callejeros (70m, WI5 M5), meaning "Street Dog Fight," after a random encounter we had during our days in La Paz.

Vertical ice climbing in Bolivia is a real adventure and not to be undertaken lightly. I was fortunate to have a strong partner, and I hope to muster the courage (and money) to attempt another go at the Cordillera Real, because having to purchase a 10-year visa for the country, I kind of feel obligated to return. [Additional information on these climbs may be found at Mountain Project.]

– Matt Hopkins, AAC

## Images



Matt Ward climbing the lower section of Attic Boys.



Cliffs below Huayna Potosí. The left-hand icefall is Pelea de Perros Callejeros.



Matt Ward on Montezuma's Revenge.



Matt Ward circumventing the skinny ice pillar on Pelea de Perros Callejeros. Milluni Lake and the Zongo Pass road are behind.



Matt Ward completing the M5 section to the top of the skinny ice pillar on Pelea de Perros Callejeros.

## Article Details

Author	Matt Hopkins
Publication	AAJ
Volume	62
Issue	94
Page	0
Copyright Date	2020
Article Type	Climbs and expeditions