



AAC Publications

Tokopah Valley, Watchtower, Big Time

California, Sequoia National Park

A few years ago, Richard Leversee encouraged Brian Prince and me to take over a project he had worked on for several years in the 1990s with Scott Cosgrove, Jay Smith, and Jim Zellers: creating an all-free line up the prow of the Watchtower, originally climbed by Greg Henzie and Galen Rowell in 1970 (see AAJ 1971). Brian and I had drooled over the Watchtower from Tokopah Dome, across the valley. The history of stronger climbers attempting it did not encourage much confidence, but the magic line of Sequoia was worth the time investment.

We first checked it out in 2018 and learned it would require a lot of crack cleaning, some bolts, and more trickery to figure out how to avoid the sections that appear to be impossible. In July 2019, we fixed several ropes in order to clean the cracks and work out where the line would go. We weren't sure it would be free climbable until the day we redpointed it, as some of the cruxes traversed a lot and we were working on the route separately, since our days off did not align well.

On August 22, everything came together perfectly. We connected the first four pitches of the original Rowell route with new terrain leading into All Along the Watchtower (Harrison-Long, 1985), from which we found a three-pitch independent finish up steep cracks and over big roofs. This allowed for a fully free line up the main prow, as Richard and we had dreamed. To involve him in the process a little more, we encouraged him to find a name for the route, and he dubbed it Big Time (1,200', IV 5.12a).

– Vitaliy Musiyenko

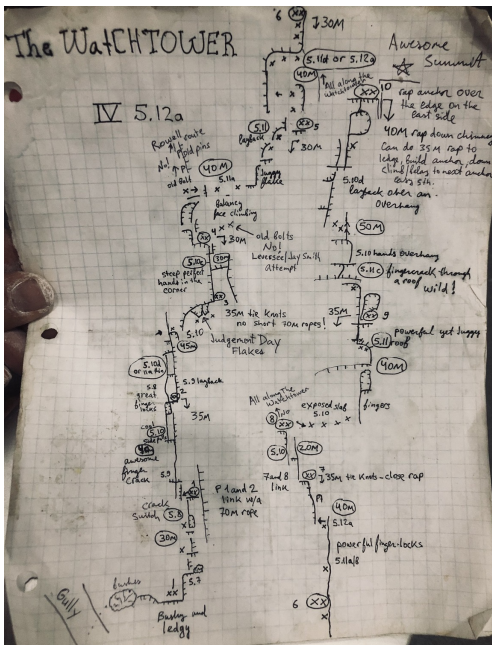
Images



The Watchtower, in the Tokopah Valley of Sequoia National Park, showing the line of Big Time (1,200', IV 5.12a). This route—which begins on the original Northeast Arête (Henzie-Rowell, 1970), links into All Along the Watchtower (Harrison-Long, 1985), and climbs a steep independent finish through the headwall—was an old Richard Leversee project that was attempted with several strong climbers in the 1990s.



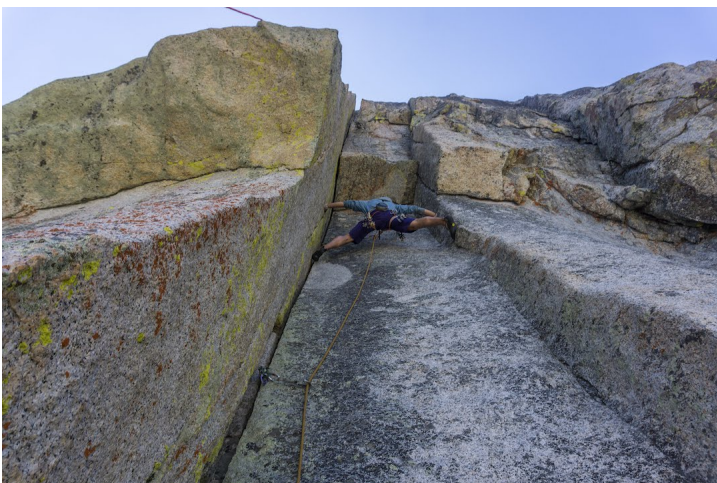
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Topo for Big Time (1,200', IV 5.12a) on the Watchtower in the Tokopah Valley of Sequoia National Park. Originally attempted by Richard Leversee and partners on several occasions, this proud new free line pieces together several old aid lines with new terrain to create a direct and difficult line up the prow of the formation.



Vitaliy Musiyenko leading out partway up the first free ascent of Big Time (1,200', IV 5.12a) on the Watchtower in the Tokopah Valley of Sequoia National Park.



Vitaliy Musiyenko enjoy steep bridging and perfect splitter cracks on the first free ascent of Big Time (1,200', IV 5.12a) on the Watchtower in the Tokopah Valley of Sequoia National Park.

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