



AAC Publications

Table Mountain, South Face, 29 Fingers

United States, Wyoming, Teton Range

Most climbers who've spent significant time on the Lower Saddle between the Grand Teton and the Middle Teton have looked off toward the western edge of the park and seen the large swath of granite walls that make up the backside of Table Mountain (11,111'). Many have even considered making the journey out there to discover what these walls possess in untouched rock. Despite this, few have followed through, and Table Mountain has seen relatively little activity from climbers in the past 25 years. Paul Horton and Jon Stuart established Heartbreak Ridge on the south buttress in July 1995. In 2013, a route named Line of Fire (III 5.10c) was put up on the south buttress. Another route named Kindred Spirits (III 5.11) was established in 2021 on the north buttress.

After enough time dreaming about Table Mountain, Jamison Johnson, Thomas Ney, and I decided a trip was in order. Based in Driggs, Idaho, the three of us decided we wouldn't use the 8.5-mile approach via Cascade Canyon, but instead hike up Table Mountain from the west. On September 29, we reached the summit of Table in about four miles via the popular Face Trail. We descended an obvious gully to the south, which brought us to the bottom of the south-facing wall just left of the southernmost buttress.

We found a line that looked manageable to the left of Heartbreak Ridge. From the ground, we could see three steep golden walls, stacked one above the other, and decided to aim for them. Above the first pitch of standard Teton choss wrangling that most local climbers know to expect, we found a pitch with a beautiful splitter crack and engaging climbing that led to a comfortable belay ledge. A stretch of low-angle loose terrain was followed by more solid rock on the fourth pitch, angling left at 5.8.

We then found ourselves on a large ledge at the base of the first headwall. The fifth pitch tackled the first half of this clean face via an exceptional 5.9 hand and fist crack. The sixth pitch, another 5.8, brought us to a large ledge below the second headwall. We bivied here, happy to take off our heavy packs filled with sleeping gear, food, and water.

The next morning, we were greeted by a sunrise over the iconic Cathedral group. The second wall, directly above us, turned out to be the crux of the route. The first half, pitch seven, was a 5.10+ hand crack terminating in a small ledge in the middle of the face. On pitch eight, gear became sparse. We resorted to aid climbing at this point, in order to find the best way through this section. Once we had sorted out good and safe protection, we lowered back down to the base of the pitch, leaving some of the gear preplaced, and climbed it on lead, also at 5.10+. We left one fixed nut behind to prevent ledge falls for future ascensionists.

Delighted, we followed another ledge system to the ninth and final pitch, which began in a corner filled with stemming and continued through a wild roof.

We finished at the top of the last headwall at 10,826' (GPS). A short third-class scramble would lead to the true summit of Table Mountain, for those who want to tag the top. We called our route 29 Fingers (660', 9 pitches, III 5.10+) in recognition of the number of fingers used between the three of us on the first ascent: Earlier in the year, Jamison had lacerated a knuckle and severed a tendon in his

pointer finger, forcing him to climb in a rigid finger cast.

— **Grant Burson**

Images



Looking up at the south face of Table Mountain from Cascade Canyon. Thomas Ney



Beautiful granite on pitch two of 29 Fingers (660', 9 pitches, III 5.10+), Table Mountain, Grand Teton National Park, Wyoming.



Jamison Johnson liebacking a flake through the crux of the second pitch of 29 Fingers (660', 9 pitches, III 5.10+), Table Mountain, Grand Teton National Park, Wyoming.



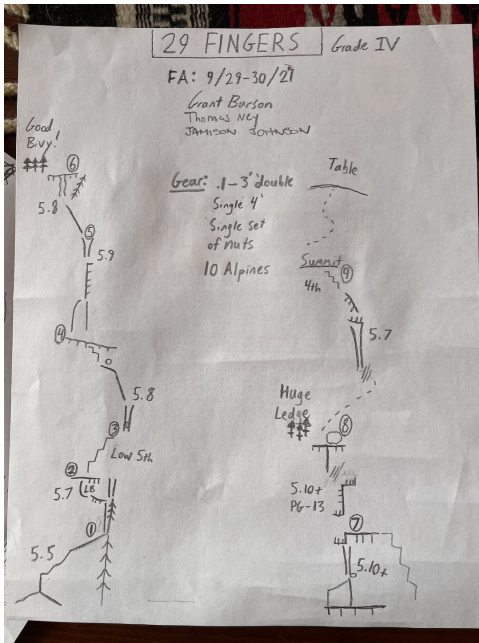
Grant Burson climbing the fourth pitch of 29 Fingers (660', 9 pitches, III 5.10+), which leads to a big ledge below the first of three steeper faces higher on the route. In back: the Grand Teton and Middle Teton.



Jamison Johnson jamming his way up pitch six, which ends at another large ledge on which he, Thomas Ney, and Grant Burson bivied during their two-day first ascent of 29 Fingers (660', 9 pitches, III 5.10+), Table Mountain, Grand Teton National Park, Wyoming.



Grant Burson warming up after a cold night with some enjoyable climbing on pitch seven of 29 Fingers (660', 9 pitches, III 5.10+).



The topo of 29 fingers (660', 9 pitches, III 5.10+), Table Mountain, Grand Teton National Park, Wyoming.



Pitches seven and eight of 29 fingers (660', 9 pitches, III 5.10+) in the evening sun.

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