Wheeler Crest, The Third Fin, Hole in the Pumpkin

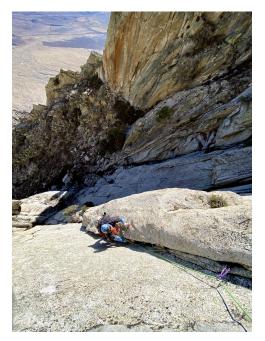United States, California, Eastern Sierra

The rugged Paradise Crags Gully west of Ainslee Meadow, roughly halfway between Bishop and Mammoth Lakes, is home to three orange rock walls that have the appearance of fins. The central of these was called the Big K-Mart in the 2001 AAJ and is also known as Paradise Point. Unimaginatively, the furthest of the three walls is known as the Third Fin. A Paradise local had climbed a short route on the detached tower at its toe, but no routes had been reported on the main wall.

On Halloween morning, Tad McCrea and I racked up at a series of orange flakes and corners leading up the center of the wall. Some dirt gave way to a nice stretch of 5.9–5.10a crack climbing. On the second and third pitches, the main corner system became quite mangy and incipient, and a few stance-drilled bolts allowed us to stay outside of it on the clean 5.10 face. Near the top of our third pitch, we found a vintage drilled-out hex and fixed piton: evident bail anchors from a 1970s or 1980s attempt at a similar line. Shortly above, on pitch four, lay the 5.11- boulder problem crux, which connected two crack systems. A wandering 5.8 pitch gained the top of the wall and the shark-fin ridge, where we now were confronted with the unappealing reality of having to walk off the formation in our climbing shoes.

Two more pitches of easy 5th class along the exposed and narrow ridge faded away uneventfully into tree-covered slopes without a proper summit block, completing Hole in the Pumpkin (1,000', IV 5.11-). We painfully descended the loose gully to climber's right. Trick or treat?

— Richard Shore

Images

Tad McCrea low on Hole in the Pumpkin on the Third Fin.

Tad McCrea midway up Hole in the Pumpkin on the Third Fin.

Hole in the Pumpkin, the first known route up the complete Third Fin formation.

Article Details

Author	Richard Shore
Publication	AAJ
Volume	64
Issue	96
Page	129
Copyright Date	2022
Article Type	Climbs and expeditions