



## AAC Publications

---

### **Uli Biaho Great Spire, East Face, Refrigerator Offwidth**

Pakistan, Karakoram, Baltoro Muztagh

**Leonardo Gheza, Francesco Ratti, and I (Italy) put up a significant new route on Uli Biaho Great Spire (as named by the first ascensionists in 2006), a 5,594m peak in the Trango Towers area.** Our 510m line follows the big corner that plunges down the middle of the east face. Incredibly, this strikingly obvious dihedral, visible from base camp, had never been climbed.

We arrived at the end of June with photographer Ettore Zorzini and acclimatized with an ascent of the northeast summit of Great Trango Tower and an attempt on Eternal Flame on Trango Tower, retreating just five pitches below the summit due to bad weather.

We then turned to our main objective. The idea of climbing the east face of Uli Biaho Great Spire had materialized after a talk with Andrej Grmovsek, who had climbed the peak's northeast face and south ridge in 2006 with Silvo Karo, via the route Three Hundred Eggs (600m, 6b+). In doing so, these two Slovenians made the first ascent of the peak.

We explored the approach on July 12. In five hours from base camp, we reached a saddle below the face at around 5,000m and stashed gear. There was then a week of bad weather, after which we made our first attempt from July 17–19. Starting from advanced base at 5,000m, we didn't manage to reach the foot of the face on the first day, due to high temperatures and the complexity of the terrain. On the 18th, after leaving camp at midnight, we arrived at the bottom of the face at first light and established the first two pitches. We quickly realized we didn't have enough food or material to complete the route and so retreated.

We rested on July 20 and returned to advanced base on the 21st. Next day we re climbed the first two pitches, above which two more took us to the base of the dihedral. For the next four pitches, the climbing was mostly offwidth with strenuous sections, mixed with ice, snow, and verglas. We used two number 5 and two number 6 cams, but even bigger cams could be useful.

Above these four pitches, and at approximately two-thirds height on the face, we bivouacked on a snow ledge using two hammocks. On the 23rd we followed a crack system left, past mixed terrain and an additional offwidth. A total of six pitches took us to the upper south ridge, which we followed to the summit in early afternoon.

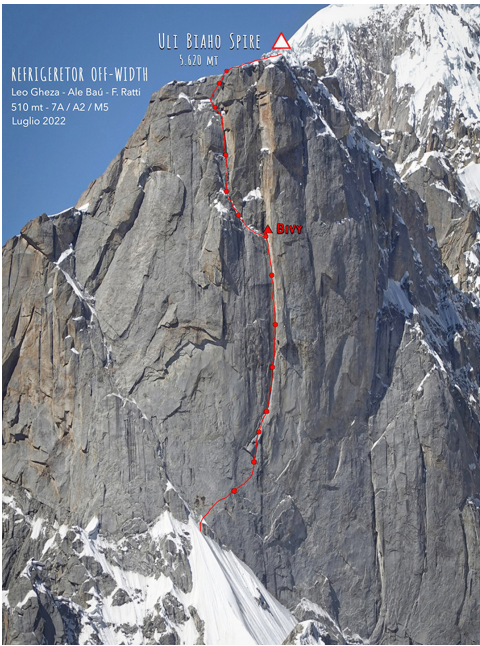
We descended the same route, though not without difficulties due to the weaving nature of the line and a stuck rope. We regained advanced base at midnight and base camp on the morning of the 24th.

We called our new route Refrigerator Offwidth due to the intense cold suffered inside the dihedral, where frigid air blew continuously from the huge crack. The difficulties were 7a, A2, and M5. Most of the belays have at least one bolt, and a few additional rappel anchors were placed during the descent. In addition, 15 protection bolts were used (on pitches 1,2,6,7,8 and 12). The route offers quite difficult and strenuous climbing, but the line is superb and the view toward the Trango group is amazing. The ledge at the top of the dihedral is the only decent place to bivouac.

After one day's rest at base camp, Francesco and I went back to Trango Tower. We climbed the Slovenian route to join Eternal Flame eight pitches from the summit, our aim being to complete the last five pitches of that route that we had failed to climb previously. We reached the summit at 6 p.m. and regained base camp in the early morning, just in time to start the trek back to Skardu.

– **Alessandro Baù, Italy**

## Images



Refrigerator Offwidth on the east face of Uli Biaho Great Spire with belay points and bivouac marked.



Uli Biaho Great Spire (left) and the magnificent east face of Uli Biaho Tower (6,109m), climbed in 1979 by Bill Forrest, Ron Kauk, John Roskelley, and Kim Schmitz from the United States.



The east side of Uli Biaho Great Spire showing the approach to the upper wall and the two existing routes: Three Hundred Eggs (2006, left) and Refrigerator Offwidth (2022).



Alessandro Baù, Leonardo Gheza, and Francesco Ratti battling with the Refrigerator Offwidth on the east face of Uli Biaho Great Spire.





Alessandro Baù, Leonardo Gheza, and Francesco Ratti at grips with the Refrigerator Offwidth, Uli Biaho Great Spire.



Alessandro Baù, Leonardo Gheza, and Francesco Ratti at grips with the Refrigerator Offwidth, Uli Biaho Great Spire.



Alessandro Baù, Leonardo Gheza, and Francesco Ratti on the summit of Uli Biaho Great Spire after the first ascent of Refrigerator Offwidth on the east face. The view behind is almost due south, over the top of the Baltoro Glacier to the various Liligo peaks. Peak 6,401m (Liligo Peak), attempted

unsuccessfully and tragically in 2019 (AAJ 2020), is the pointed summit distant left.



The Refrigerator Offwidth on the east face of Uli Biaho Great Spire. The view is to the northwest, up the Trango Glacier. The high peaks in the far distance are on or near the Chinese border. The high rocky peak to the right is Kruksum. Below and nearer the camera, the rock buttresses and ridges falling to grassy terraces or directly onto the Trango Glacier form the west flanks of Trango Ri I and II.

## Article Details

Author	Alessandro Baù
Publication	AAJ
Volume	65
Issue	97
Page	298
Copyright Date	2023
Article Type	Climbs and expeditions