



AAC Publications

Morurco, Southwest Face, Nitroglycerin

Ecuador, Northern Andes

On May 1, Gonzalo Espinosa and I drove to the upper highlands below Cotopaxi's south face. This is a flat highland area composed of scree created by this huge volcano's eruptions and ancient glaciers. From here we targeted our objective, Morurco (4,880m), a rarely climbed peak located just south of Cotopaxi. This peak was first climbed in 1971, utilizing a long approach and siege-style climbing. Its walls are steep, with terrible rock—a combination of loose rock, verglas, and mud.

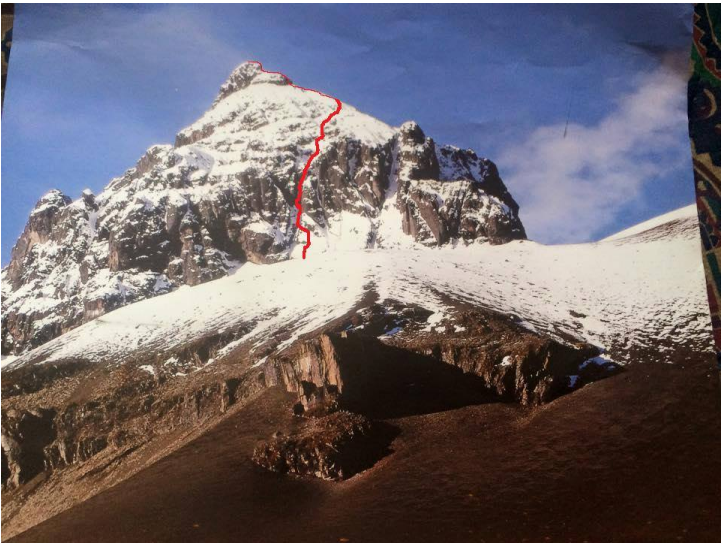
Gonzalo and I started our approach at 3 a.m. on May 2 and reached the peak at first light. A 60m scramble brought us to a prominent gash on the vertical and unclimbed southwest face. For four hours we climbed meticulously, with very committing moves on both pure rock and mixed terrain. We were able to place only four pieces of protection and one untrustworthy anchor before reaching the easier summit snow slopes: Nitroglycerin (200m, 5.9 R/X M4). Summit glory came with a spectacular view of Cotopaxi from the tallest balcony in Ecuador. We descended the normal route on the neighboring southeast side.

– Felipe Proaño, Ecuador

Images



Felipe Proaño and Gonzalo Espinosa on the summit of Morurco.



The southwest face of Morurco, showing the route Nitroglycerin (200m, 5.9 R/X M4).



Climbing steep, loose rock on the southwest face of Morurco.

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