



AAC Publications

Spearpoint Lake, New Routes

Wyoming, Wind River Range

Having both been born within a few days of each other in mid-August, Drew Smith and I have made a tradition of celebrating together with an annual backcountry getaway. This year we decided to make it a real party and invited our good buds Jack Cramer and Rob Duncan along to check out some imposing walls above Spearpoint Lake, about five miles north of the Cirque of the Towers.

In the Kelsey guide, the broad plateau summit above the cirque is called Chess Ridge, after a set of small towers on the far south end that resemble chess pieces. Farther north, on the east side of this plateau, several massive walls rise above this dual-pronged cirque, yet perhaps due to not being visible from any trail and not being pictured in the guidebook, only one previous party had reported climbing here (see AAJ 2017).

On August 8, the four of us shouldered monster packs in the Big Sandy parking lot and marched 16 miles over Washakie Pass, going cross-country the last several miles and gaining the awe-inspiring cirque via a small pass to the south. We spent the next day hiking, snapping photos, and surveying the potential. True to the Wind River Range's history of under-reporting, we found the steepest and cleanest line, just left of the col separating the two arms of the cirque, sporting rather new anchor hardware and some shiny protection bolts.

Unsure if this mystery route was still a project or had been completed, we decided to turn our attention to unexplored possibilities on the farthest right wall. After identifying two possible lines, we split into pairs and left camp before dawn on August 10.

Rob and I started with a long scramble up slabs, which led to the base of an obvious cleft on the right margin of the wall. After climbing a steep corner on the right side of this gully, we crossed to the left side midway up the first roped pitch and gained the main wall via a sneaky broken crack. After three fun pitches on this aspect, we traversed a ledge straight left and rounded the corner onto a steeper face. Here we encountered exciting and exposed climbing, as well as the crux of the route, trending up and left for several pitches to a final tiered corner system that spit us out on the boulder-strewn summit plateau. ConSpearacy Theory (1,200', IV 5.10+) is fairly sustained at 5.10 and named for our many postulations about the cirque's striking mystery route.

Drew and Jack began on the left side of the face, following a prominent slash feature that trended up and right. They reported deceptively tricky climbing off the snow (5.10+), followed by 800' of wandering terrain in the 5.9–5.10 range. On a large ledge below a pair of overhanging grooves, the crux materialized in the form of an ever-shrinking rail extending out of view to the right. They named their route Tomahawk Swing (1,200', IV 5.11) for the wrecking-ball potential of a fall during this wildly exposed hand traverse. One hundred feet higher, they gained the same finishing corner system and followed our chalk marks for a pitch and a half to the top.

After a rest day, which included trekking pole fishing (little success), numerous games of rock bocce (varying success), and cutting Drew a stylish mullet with a dull pair of Leatherman scissors (huge success), we deemed many of the other possible lines in the cirque too wet, discontinuous, or chossy-looking. Ready to move on to greener pastures, we racked up for a quick and final jaunt up the cool-looking right-hand skyline ridge before leaving.

We left at first light and ended up sniffing out a very moderate and highly enjoyable path to the summit plateau, only putting on the rope for a half-pitch in a flared corner. After arriving back in camp before lunch, an unfortunate incident involving a dehydrated breakfast gave the route its name—the Bandito Scramble (1,200', 5.5).

– Andy Anderson

Images



Approaching a wall above Spearpoint Lake in the early-morning light. Andy Anderson, Jack Cramer, Rob Duncan, and Drew Smith climbed two new routes on the wall: Tomahawk Swing (1,200', IV 5.11) and ConSpearacy Theory (1,200', IV 5.10+).



Jack Cramer jamming high-quality Wind River granite during the first ascent of Tomahawk Swing (1,200', IV 5.11) above Spearpoint Lake.



Jack Cramer contemplating options from the shore near camp in the Spearpoint Lake cirque, in Wyoming's Wind River Range.



Rob Duncan leading the first roped pitch during the first ascent of ConSpearacy Theory (1,200', IV 5.10+). From here, the route moved left and gained the main wall above.



Rob Duncan jamming a steep, clean corner high on the wall during the first ascent of ConSpearacy Theory (1,200', IV 5.10+) above Spearpoint Lake.



The farthest right wall above Spearpoint Lake, showing two routes completed by Andy Anderson, Jack Cramer, Rob Duncan, and Drew Smith in August 2019. Tomahawk Swing (1,200', IV 5.11) is on the left, and ConSpearacy Theory (1,200', IV 5.10+) is on the right.



Drew Smith (white helmet) leading high on the wall during the first ascent of Tomahawk Swing (1,200', IV 5.11) in the Spearpoint Lake cirque.



Jack Cramer enjoying moderate terrain and big views during the Bandito Scramble (1,200', 5.5). This climb follows the northern ridgeline of the Spearpoint Lake cirque in the Wind River Range. Spearpoint Lake is behind in the sun.



Drew Smith looking down from near the summit plateau after the likely first ascent of the Bandito Scramble (1,200', 5.5), a ridgeline on the northern edge of the Spearpoint Lake cirque in Wyoming's Wind River Range.

Article Details

Author	Andy Anderson
Publication	AAJ
Volume	62
Issue	94
Page	
Copyright Date	2020
Article Type	Climbs and expeditions