



AAC Publications

Snoqualmie Mountain, Northwest Face, The Snostril

Washington, Cascade Mountains

During early December 2020, on a way-too-early ice hunting trip to the northwest face of Snoqualmie Mountain (6,278') with Tom Beirne and Christian Junkar, I spotted a plastered smear that I had never noticed previously. This smear was located much farther west (climber's right) than the established mixed lines on the face, of which there are at least five (including route variations). It sits roughly halfway between the western exit chute of Thunder Basin (the bowl below the northwest face) and the Snot Couloir. The ice that grabbed my attention would not be called ice in most other places, but we take what we can get around here. We decided to try it.

After about 40m of scratching verglas, with occasional rock gear, I pulled into an alcove on the left, happy to be done blunting my picks. Tom led a second 20m pitch, but the terrain above looked even more suspect. We bailed.

When Christian and I returned a month later, we found slightly thicker ice and added a 60m rope-stretching pitch of WI4- above our first outing's effort. It ended in a cave beneath a massive chockstone. Exiting the cave would require navigating an overhanging wall on the right. The lack of features and gear once again stopped us in our tracks.

Tom, Christian, and I returned a final time on January 29, 2021. Screw placements were finally frequent and secure. Even better, the crux overhanging wall to the right of the cave was both shorter—due to snow accumulation—and was now plastered with ice. After 5m of easy ice, Tom climbed out of the cave via a 15m section of techy WI4 M5 climbing, and finished out the 30m pitch on easier snow.

We were now in the bottom of a 50° snow couloir. Though the original plan had been to simul to the top of the couloir, a mixed pitch 55m higher spoke to Christian. This 30m WI4 M5 alternative finish, which we named the "Post Nasal Drip," had the best pure ice of the day. We topped out on a western subsummit of Snoqualmie. A steep walk off the south side brought us down to our packs.

Though the northwest face of Snoqualmie Mountain is not easy to reach, I was surprised that no one had reported climbing our route before—rightly so, it turned out. After asking around and posting on CascadesClimbers.com, we heard from Mike Preiss, who told us he attempted the route in 1993 and backed off at the crux traverse out of the cave. In 2010, he rapped in and rope-soloed the crux. Therefore, Mike gets credit for the first ascent of the route, piecemeal; ours was the first integral free ascent: The Snostril (250m, WI4 M5).

— Doug Hutchinson

Images



The northwest face of Snoqualmie Peak, as seen in *Classic Cascade Climbs* (2021), showing known routes. (F) shows the line of Snostril, far to the right of previous climbs.



Tom Beirne climbing the mixed crux of the Snostril on the northwest face of Snoqualmie Mountain.



Christian Junkar leading a pitch the team dubbed the "Post Nasal Drip," an alternative to the moderate snow couloir finish of the Snostril on the northwest face of Snoqualmie Mountain.



The first pitch of the Snostril on Snoqualmie Mountain.



Tom Beirne and Christian Junkar entering the Snostril cave on the northwest face of Snoqualmie Mountain.



Christian Junkar leading up the final snow couloir before the Post Nasal Drip alternate finish to the Snostril on the northwest face of Snoqualmie Mountain.

Article Details

Author	Doug Hutchinson
Publication	AAJ
Volume	64
Issue	96
Page	
Copyright Date	2022
Article Type	Climbs and expeditions