



Ama Dablam, West Face, Damilano Route and Rapid Ascent of American Direct

Nepal, Mahalangur Himal—Khumbu Section

Previously unreported in the AAJ was a new route up the west face of Ama Dablam (6,812m) climbed solo on November 9, 1993, by Francois Damilano (France).

Damilano had reached the summit via the normal route on November 4 while part of a commercial expedition. After returning to base camp, he left camp at 3 a.m. on the 9th and started climbing the west face a little to the right of the American Direct (Dunmire-Warner, 1990). He crossed this route and the 1985 Japanese route to its left, before arcing back to join the American Direct at the upper left end of the Dablam (the conspicuous serac barrier near the top right side of the west face). He then traversed across the top of the Dablam to reach the southwest ridge at 6,600m. It was 4 p.m., he was tired, and had already been to the summit a few days previously. From this point, he descended the normal route to Camp 2 and spent the night there before returning to base.

In November 2021, Zdeněk Hák and Jakub Kácha made a rare ascent of the American Direct on the west face with only two bivouacs. Above the Dablam, the two Czechs finished direct to the summit, following the last section of a line climbed in 1986 by another Czech, Miroslav Smid, solo. A little earlier, the two Czechs had climbed to the summit via the normal route, both for acclimatization and to scope the line on the west face. Hák and Kácha found sections of UIAA IV/V rock, WI4, and M4/5, suggesting an overall grade of TD+/ED1.

The American Direct, which takes the relatively sheltered rib leading to the left edge of the Dablam, was first climbed over four days by Glenn Dunmire and Chris Warner, finishing at the summit on the first day of the calendar winter, December 21, 1990. Above the Dablam, they slanted right to finish up the final 200m of the southwest ridge. They graded their 1,500m route 5.6 AI4 (AAJ 1991).

The second ascent took place in November 2006, when it was climbed with four bivouacs by the Japanese Yasuyuki Shinno and Takahiro Yoshida (AAJ 2007). They set off one day after a large section of the Dablam fell off, allowing other avalanches to impact Camp 3 on the Shoulder of the southwest ridge, killing six climbers. It is not clear whether the Japanese finished direct or traversed out right like Dunmire and Warner.

— Lindsay Griffin, with additional information from Rodolphe Popier, Himalayan Database, France

Images



The west face of Ama Dablam in November 1993. (Red line) Damilano Route to 6,600m on the southwest ridge. (Blue line) American Direct with the Smid finish, as climbed by Zdenek Háek and Jakub Kácha in 2021. Other routes not shown. François Damilano Collection

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