

107 Hours of Suffering

The Nose, El Capitan, Yosemite Valley, California

By Erik Fischer & Ross Andrea

Video of the climb

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bxvilH7aTq0>

Introduction

All references with regards to the direction of the route are giving from the perspective of the climber facing inward.

We arrived in Yosemite Valley on the morning of May 29th, 2011. As we drove into Yosemite Valley that day and saw El Captain up close and personal, I really wondered if we could pull off this climb. I had more than the normal level of concern. My personal life had become nothing short of a complete catastrophe. In the previous seven months my marriage failed, my dad died, I had a near fatal car accident, my career of 20 years ended abruptly and a failed heart procedure six days earlier had left me with a lot of pain in my right leg. To make matters worse, the weather was terrible, and I was going to have to "Man up" and lead several pitches for any chance of success.

After establishing base camp at Camp Four, we began the arduous process of organizing our gear. All of this had to be accomplished inside our tent as it was raining furiously. We were very antsy on the first day and contemplated starting up immediately. However, our better judgment prevailed. We waited until the next day to start the climb when the weather was slightly better.

The Approach

The next day (May30th) we got up early and hiked in to the base of the climb (about 20 minutes with our heavily loaded pack and haul bag). We opted for the pine line approach (5.7). After climbing the pine line we had to do a 4th class pitch to get to the start of the climb.

We thought we were the only ones on the wall. However, upon

reaching the top of the Pine Line, I noticed that there were three parties coming up the 4th class approach to the right, and that they would all be ahead of us by the time we got to the 1st pitch. Also, there were two parties behind us on the pine line approach. By the time I got to the start of the 1st pitch, one of the parties below us decided to bail. However, a three man Japanese team had caught up with Ross who was below me. Ross attempted communication with the leader. He told him that we would be climbing to the "Sickle Ledge" and fixing four ropes to the ground. Then we would rappel to the ground that night. We would then return in one or two days to climb the rest of the route. He replied "Seeko." So we weren't really sure if he knew what the hell we were talking about. Ross then told him it would be easier for them if they hauled their bag from the left because of the rope drag. The leader shook his head and said "Okay" and then continued to haul from the right. I guess he didn't understand Ross. It took them hours before they gave up and tried hauling from the left.

All of the parties ahead of us were not hauling. That made the spacing between us more than adequate once we started up.

Pitch 1 (5.11d or C1 - 130 feet)

It had a lot of flared out pods that protected well with master cams (yellow and orange). There were also a lot of bigger flares in the .75 range. There was some wetness on part of the route due to an unusual amount of May rain.

Pitch 2 (5.11d or c1+ - 90 feet)

Over all this pitch seemed easier than the previous pitch with the exception of a couple of aid placements higher up (I think those were the C1+ moves). There is a tricky sequence around a short bulge involving some thin aid placements. This is the crux. Then I did a pendulum from a bolt and aided up a 5.11d C1 crack. I back cleaned until I was above the bolt. The placements on the 1st two pitches were straightforward in the sense that you knew exactly where each piece was supposed to go (In the pin scars). However, fitting the protection in those scars was another matter. We only brought one set of master cams. They worked quite well but it would have been better to have two sets of them in the yellow, orange and blue colors for the entire climb (two sets of aliens would have worked even

better).

Hauling - Lower out the Pig.

Pitch 3 (5.10c or c2+ - 100 feet)

Ross led the next pitch. By using a combination of free, French-free and some aid climbing he was able to dispatch this pitch rather quickly. The crux comes in the middle of a bolted section. It was easy to reach the first series of bolts but suddenly there is a gap without any chance to place protection. Finding no other option, Ross free climbed the rest of the pitch. These free moves are no harder than 5.9.

Pitch 4 (5.11c or c2+ - 100 feet)

Ross free climbed the first half of the pitch (5.9). About halfway through the pitch he reached a leaver carabiner. He clipped the leaver carabiner with a quick draw and did a tensioned traverse. He traversed right on good footholds until reaching a piton in a right facing flake. Aiding up the flake and back cleaning allowed him to make another tension traverse to a left facing flake on Sickle Ledge. At that point, he switched to free climbing. Ross protected this section by sliding a #1 cam until it didn't fit anymore. He placed a cam later for a directional.

I learned the first time I followed this pitch to put the bite from my harness through the tat instead of the leaver carabiner. After I lowered out the first time, I couldn't get the bite through due to rope twist, and I had to haul myself back to the pendulum point to lower myself out again.

Hauling - Lower out the Pig a lot. Watch out for a large flake that can cause a serious snag. We avoided this by good communication and coordination.

Rappel and rest

We opted to fix two 50 meter and two 60 meter ropes to the ground instead of tying three 60 meter ropes together. This was so we wouldn't have to deal with passing the knot while rappelling and ascending the fixed lines. We left our haul bag, poop sack, food and water on the sickle ledge. We loosely tied the ends of our ropes into the anchor below to

prevent them from being lost in the wind.

While fixing and rappelling from Sickle Ledge, I accidentally put my gri-gri on the wrong side of the knot and almost rappelled off the end. This of course would have meant certain death. I think this happened because I left a lot of slack in the rope after I tied the knot. I then accidentally grabbed the wrong end and fed it through the gri-gri. I always take one final look at everything before I start a rappel to make sure everything looks ok. Luckily, I caught the error on my last second check before I killed myself.

We planned on returning early Thursday morning to jumar the fixed lines in the dark and get as high as possible the first day. That was not to be.

The Waiting

We needed four days of clear weather to begin our ascent of the Nose. The weather stayed bad for eight days. We continuously analyzed five different weather sites for comparative analysis of the impending weather at the Curry Village Lodge.

One day the Japanese team, who we dubbed "Team Seeko" (sickle with a Japanese accent), were all sitting in the lodge waiting out the weather like the rest of us. A strange curiosity came over me and I slowly meandered past them to see what they were reading. It was an introductory climbing and knot-tying book. Wow! One of them was even wearing an ankle cast. Maybe we're not the most clueless team on El Cap after all. We will always wonder if they made it?

On June 6th we looked at the weather reports for the next day. They ranged from 20 to 30 percent chance of rain. It was good enough for us. The decision was made for a summit push.

First Bivy

A lot of politicking occurs at the base of the climb. If you arrive there first, you have rights to go first. We learned from previous experience that if someone tells you they are fast climbers and they are wearing kneepads and four aid ladders that it would not be wise to let them

pass. We did not let anyone pass us that were hauling a bag (However, this was never a problem as no multiday parties ever caught up with us). Furthermore, we decided to bivy at the base of El Captain and get an early start so no one would cut in front of us.

As we approached our fixed lines, we noticed two things: there were four different sets of fixed lines leading to the Sickle Ledge and there was a party of two rappelling our fixed lines. I approached the party rappelling our lines and told them our fixed lines had been up the longest. I asked them what time they wanted to start and told them we would start jumaring an hour before they started. We agreed this would provide adequate spacing. Sleep was difficult knowing an epic journey of 3000 vertical feet lay ahead.

Jumaring in the dark

We woke up at two and ate a small breakfast. We started jumaring the fixed lines at 3 AM. We dropped our two lowest ropes after jumaring them. Ross's girlfriend Richelle retrieved our ropes and bivy gear later that morning. I was really happy we were out in front.

We reached our previous high point (Sickle Ledge) in about an hour. Our plan was to swap lead as much as possible. However, if there were other parties encroaching on us from behind, then Ross would lead more of the time, because he is quicker. We felt this strategy would give us the best chance for success and keep us from getting cluster f@cked with any other parties.

Pitch 5 (The easiest pitch on the climb 4th class - 100 feet)

You can definitely do this one in your tennis shoes. I stopped at a small ledge about 100 feet away from sickle ledge and built an anchor. The hauling here was difficult. Ross had to push while I hauled. Pitch 5 cannot be linked with pitch 6 using a 60 meter rope unless you move the belay quite some distance. We figured it was just as expeditious to do another pitch.

Hauling - Worst on the route.

Pitch 6 (5.9 or C1 - 100 feet)

Most of pitch 6 is fairly easy. The 5.9 climbing (the crux) is close to the end of the pitch when you pull out on to the face. It's a really wild move because it is overhanging and super exposed.

Hauling - Okay. But it's best to push the pig out onto the face as soon as possible.

Pitch 7 (5.8 or C1 - 100 feet)

This pitch starts with a lower out and fairly lengthy pendulum swing. The pendulum is easier from the higher bolt, which is not difficult to attain. Once I pendulumed into a crack, it was easy climbing but very loose and a little scary in the 5.6 section. I didn't place protection until I was a little bit above the belay station. There is only one bolt at the belay station so backing it up with a couple of cams made a bomber anchor. The belay stance is miserable, semi-hanging and cramped.

Hauling - Lower out the Pig. The follower should push the bag out of the dihedral and onto the face.

The Stovelegs

The Stovelegs are over 400 feet in length and one of Yosemite's finest crack systems. The Stoveleg crack begins after completing a pendulum swing at the beginning of pitch 8 and lasts all the way to Dolt Tower. It is named the Stovelegs, because when it was first climbed by Warren Harding in 1958 cast iron stove legs were used for protection. At that time no other protection had been invented that would protect the crack. Successfully climbing the Stovelegs in the 1950's was a remarkable accomplishment!

Hauling - All the hauling in the Stovelegs was easy with the exception of it being our first day on the wall (our bag was at its heaviest). The party behind us was gaining on us, so I dug out the big cams and handed them to Ross.

Pitch 8 (5.9 or C1 - 120 feet)

We decided to do the tension traverse from just below dolt hole. After doing the traverse Ross lead up a 5.9 lie back at the beginning of the Stoveleg crack. The top part of the

pitch had perfect 5.8 hand jams. Ross placed a bomber cam at this part and ran it out pretty far. It's some of the best free climbing on the route!

Pitch 9 (5.10a off width or C1 - 150 feet)

This pitch started off with the continuation of the 5.8 hand jamming until the size of the crack gradually increased to a 5.10 off width crack. Ross burned the number five pretty early and walked the number fours using a lot of French-Free climbing technique for speed.

Pitch 10 (5.10b or C1 fist - 160 feet)

5.8 flakes and squeeze followed by 5.10 off width at the top. It seemed if you buried your arm deep in the crack it was easier to fist jam and you could cam your arm for more security. There is a sustained and lengthy finish to this pitch where the crack is mostly four inches and since Ross was getting tired he continued using a French Free climbing method by walking the number four cams and using them for handholds. This turned out to be a very fast technique. At the end of pitch 10 we had two pitches of spacing between us and the party below us.

Pitch 11 (5.10c off width C1 - 40 feet)

We couldn't quite link pitch 11 with pitch 10 with a 60 meter rope so we did a fun short pitch. Since we were making such good time, Ross passed me the rack. It was easy to aid and probably not that hard to free climb if you weren't tired. The 10c section is only about 30 feet and then its low 5th class to the anchors on Dolt tower. We reached Dolt Tower at 12:30. We were way ahead of schedule and thought about climbing to Camp IV. However, the weather looked ominous. We opted instead to fix a rope to the top of pitch 13 and Bivy on Dolt Tower.

Hauling - Lower out the Pig.

Pitch 12 (5.8 or C1 -100 feet)

This pitch is a great photo opportunity! From the right of Dolt Tower you down climb then traverse to a terribly awkward squeeze chimney (It was worse wearing a massive aid rack). Although frightening, due to a lack of protection opportunities, the chances of sliding out of such a cramped

position were slim. There were plenty of opportunities to place protection after the top of the chimney. After the Chimney there is spectacular hand crack (5.8) until you reach a good belay ledge.

Hauling - Lower out the Pig

Pitch 13 (5.10c or C1 off width - 100 feet)

We were just barely able to link this pitch with pitch 12 using a 60 meter rope. We wanted to fix all the way through the Jardine traverse but that can only be done with a 70-meter rope. It was a fist-jam fest mostly. Protection on this pitch consisted of continuously leapfrogging #4 Cams and occasionally the #5.

Hauling - Lower out the Pig

Second Bivy (Dolt Tower)

We decided not to continue to the bivy at El Cap Tower. Instead we decided to bypass that bivy, Texas Flake, Boot Flake and the King Swing by doing the "Jardine Traverse" the following day. This strategy saved us time and allowed us to maintain our position in front of all of the other parties. I heard later that two different parties did the "King Swing" simultaneously the following day. Wow!

It rained quite a bit during the bivy. Ross told me later that I was laughing manically during the storm. I have no recollection of doing this. However, it definitely sounds like something I would do. We only brought two little emergency bivy sacks. As a result of that, everything got completely soaked. Since our sleeping bags were down we decided on a late start the next day to try to let our stuff dry out a little in the sun.

Pitch 14 (The Jardine Traverse 5.12a or 5.9 A0 - 50 feet)

We jumared our fixed line to the start of the Jardine Traverse. This pitch is only about 50 feet and bolted. Ross placed a couple of pieces of small gear once the bolts ran out. Following this pitch presented a problem for me at first. I figured out the easiest way to follow this pitch (especially the 1st quick draw) is to remove the draws when you can just barely reach them while your body is still to the right of the quick draw.

Hauling - Lower out the Pig

Pitch 15 (5.9 face or 5.7 C1 - 80 feet)

Ross flew up this fun bit of 5.9 free climbing in a dihedral.

Pitch 16 (5.11c fingers or C1 - 110 feet)

The aid here is pretty straightforward on the 1st section. However, when I got near the top of the pitch I led up the left side because the topo indicated it was a lie back and not the off width. The topo actually had it reversed. The left side is the off width and the right side is the lie back. I didn't realize this until a little too late. I kept sliding the one #5 we had on the rack upward until it was almost completely tipped out. There was still a good bit of free climbing above with only one tipped out #5 for protection. I opted to lower out and pendulum right into the other crack. I protected it, but back cleaned as I ascended to prevent rope drag. If I were to do this pitch again, I would go with the right crack but only because off width sketches me out. To do this, you need to traverse a thin horizontal crack just before the crack starts to get really wide.

Eagle Ledge

This is where you are supposed to land when you do the King Swing. We rejoined the normal route here. Two climbers I know actually bivied here after one of them broke his hand on the King Swing. The ledge is maybe three by four feet and has awesome exposure!

Pitch 17 (5.10c or C1 - 130 feet)

Ross free climbed, French freed and did a little aid to reach the anchors on this pitch. This pitch seemed like it would be frightening to lead after doing the king swing because of a lack of protection and the possibility of a massive pendulum fall.

Pitch 18 (5.12 or 5.10 A0 - 140 feet)

Ross felt up to the challenge of free climbing 5.10 so we opted to do one more route variation. We traversed left and

did the 5.10 A0 variation. By doing this we avoided having to do a pendulum and a hanging belay. This saved us quite a bit of time. It was similar to the Jardine traverse. However, after the bolts ran out, Ross had to do a few mandatory 5.10 moves to gain a sloping ledge. This pitch was much easier to clean than the Jardine traverse.

Hauling - Lower out the Pig

Pitch 19 (5.7 - 100 feet)

From our position after the bypass this pitch felt shorter than 100 feet. It is a very easy traverse through meandering blocks. The follower must climb with the pig.

Hauling - Lower out the Pig. The follower has to help push/drag the bag.

Pitch 20 (5.11c or C1 - 100 feet)

Ross aided to a bolt then tension traversed left. After the traverse Ross French-Free climbed his way through wet terrain to the tiered ledge known as Camp IV.

Third Bivy (Camp IV)

Camp IV was described in the guidebook as a poor bivy. We concur with that description. It consists of an upper and a lower ledge. The lower ledge is about 3 x 6 feet. The upper ledge slopes outward and is about 2 x 4 feet. There was still a lot of snow on top of El Cap. As a result of that, there was a lot of water run off that drenched me all night. Ross slept with his legs dangling off the edge of the lower tier.

Pitch 21 (5.9 or C1 - 100 feet)

The information in the guidebook depicts one bolt at the lower belay station and two bolts at the higher belay station. It is actually the other way around. Ross free climbed his way past a double bolt anchor to a pointed horn and then to a single bolt directly below the crack beginning the Great Roof. We made our belay at the higher belay station.

Hauling - Lower out the Pig

Pitch 22 (The Great Roof 5.13d or C2F - 120 feet)

Ross gave me no choice but to lead this, and since I just slammed a five-hour energy, I was psyched to climb one of the most classic pitches in all of rock climbing. The biggest piece of gear I used on this pitch was a .75. The initial crack was sopping wet and filled with moss. It was nice to have triples of the small gear.

Transitioning into the overhang of the great roof was problematic, because it was wet and slimy. I couldn't really use my feet on the wet face to help me make it to the first fixed piece in the roof. So I had to do an additional aid move. I used a purple master cam. But every time I weighted it, it blew out. The only protection I could get to fit was a blue ball nut (which I had dropped twice during the climb and luckily was able to retrieve both times). It was a little freaky using the fixed gear but there wasn't anywhere else to put gear in unless you had a hammer and pitons. One of the nuts I used to aid off of was half way out and rotating on a crystal point.

The last section is 5.7 and was fairly easy. However, making it to the belay was a little sketchy due to the exposure and the potential for a fairly long pendulum fall. Also, it didn't help that I was wearing wet tennis shoes.

Ross used all of our hero loops following this pitch (We only brought four for the entire route). We probably should have bought a couple more.

Hauling - Lower out the Pig

Pitch 23 (Pancake Flake 5.11c or C1 - 110 feet)

The first part of this pitch is a spectacular right facing flake that Ross free climbed. Midway through the pitch there is a sloping ledge that he rested on to let a solo climber named Mason pass through. Ross blindly sank a triple zero cam and weighted it. After a bounce test it popped out and he fell onto the sloping ledge and almost slid off. Had he not caught himself he would have taken a long fall. After the small sloping ledge he aided the rest of the pitch.

Pitch 24 (5.11a or C1+ awkward - 110 feet)

This pitch leads to Camp V. It begins in an acute dihedral that makes aid climbing very difficult. Ross had a hell of a time maneuvering and balancing his body to make aid placements. A transition out of the corner higher up leads to easier terrain and then finally a series of perfect, dry bivy ledges.

Hauling - Lower out the Pig

Pitch 25 (Glowering Spot 5.12d or C1 - 110 feet)

We were both physically and mentally drained, but I convinced Ross to lead us up to Camp VI in order to remain ahead of the pack. We ate lunch on one of the ledges and then proceeded upward.

This is a technical aid pitch involving many nut placements in a thin crack. Despite fatigue and full on aid climbing, we both managed to make it to a decent belay ledge in good time. There is a beautiful view to the west and as the sun crept toward the horizon I imagined what Lynn Hill felt like as she rested here during her one-day free ascent.

Hauling - Lower out the Pig

Pitch 26 (5.11b or C1+ - 150 feet)

After a short aid section right out of the belay the climbing became easier. There were several tiny ledges before reaching Camp VI. The closer we got to the Camp VI ledge the wetter the rock became. As I reached the anchor Ross was standing there soaked and angry.

Fourth Bivy (Camp VI)

We arrived at camp VI right after the sun set. It was a nightmare. We had heard from others that Camp VI sucked because it smelled really bad. Our troubles were far worse than that. We realized at once we were in a desperate situation.

The Bivy site is shaped like an 8 x 8 x 8 foot triangle. It was completely drenched from snowmelt and was being continuously pelted with more runoff. Our options seemed bleak. We probably would've frozen to death if we just stayed in our bivy sacks. They hadn't keep our sleeping

bags dry at Dolt Tower or Camp IV and were still wet. My mind raced through our options with what little daylight we had left. I contemplated rappelling to a ledge I saw a half a pitch lower. However, the ledge was tiny (maybe 2 x 5 feet). Ross came up with the idea, rather quickly, to use all of our trash bags to make some sort of emergency shelter (luckily for us, I had accidentally put extras in the haul bag). We anchored our trash bags to the wall in three places and then shingled them. We anchored the entire structure on the bottom by attaching water bottles to the bottom and casting them over the edge. It took us a good bit of time to complete this entire process. In the meantime, all of our stuff got drenched. When we finally got in the shelter we had to be extremely careful not to move very much for fear that the whole thing would collapse. It was not very sturdy and it was only partially effective in keeping the snowmelt off of us. However, it was enough of a shelter to keep us from dying.

We had another miserable bivy in wet sleeping bags with almost no sleep. Not much was said. The summit was only 5 pitches away but we still had to surmount the crux pitch and we were nearing the end of our energy reserves.

Pitch 27 (Changing Corners 5.14a or C2+ - 150 feet)

Even though this was Ross's pitch to lead, it really sucked for both of us. The first part of this pitch is 5.8 and then 5.10d. However, none of it could be free climbed because it was slimy and wet. While Ross was getting ready to enter the crux, the gear loop connected to the protraction pulley broke. Thankfully, he had attached the end of the haul line to another part of his harness. With the pulley attached to the haul line it zipped all the way down to the bag. To make matters worse he was over half way so he had to down aid, so I could send the pulley back up to him.

The upper part was dry but there was a sharp edge that the rope ran over while Ross was leading the very thin crux. He put climbing tape on the edge to protect the rope in case of a fall. We're still not sure if that would have kept the rope from cutting (ropes don't break, they cut). Thankfully, he did not fall.

All of this took quite some time. We had already torn down our makeshift shelter and there was no way for me to avoid

being bombarded with freezing cold water. I keep doing the meringue to keep from freezing to death. I could not have been happier to get off that hellhole of a ledge.

Pitch 28 (5.10d or C1 - 90 feet)

Ross aided straight up a finger crack and traversed right around a bulge. He pulled into and climbed through a 5.6 trough. Then he climbed into a cave and belayed from bolt anchors. Bring climbing shoes on this one. Ross had a hard time climbing the slick 5.6 granite in his wet approach shoes.

Pitch 29 (5.10d or C2F - 120 feet)

From the belay Ross aided up and right (look for fixed gear and pitons). One of the pitons flexed considerably with body weight so be careful or just pretend it's fine. Most of the rock was wet. There is a section toward the end of the overhanging traverse that Ross free climbed due to lack of aid placements. I guess that was the C2 part. This was followed by easy terrain to a chair-sized ledge with a fantastic view.

Pitch 30 (5.10c or C1 - 70 feet)

This short pitch is an aesthetic layback flake that ends very close to the bolt ladder. There are no bolt anchors at the belay station but a couple of cams and a bolt make a bomber anchor. I want to rappel down to the bottom of this pitch someday just to try and free climb it. This pitch is incredibly exposed!

Pitch 31 (The bolt ladder 5.5 C1 - 140 feet)

This pitch went super fast compared to the way things had been going. It's pretty wild how it overhangs so dramatically with 3000 feet of exposure. I clipped every fourth or fifth bolt with a quick draw to prevent too much rope drag. There is a spot where you have to aid off a .75 cam to make the next bolt. I arrived at the final bolt so quickly I thought someone had chopped the rest of the bolts. Then I realized I was at the end of the bolt ladder, and I had to start free climbing. It felt like there were only a couple of low 5th class moves right after the bolt ladder ended. The topo indicated there were two sets of bolt anchors, but I only found the ones on the right so I

built an anchor to the left.

Hauling - Easiest of the entire route, just let it fly!

The Summit

Wow! I couldn't believe we were still alive. We sat on top and ate the rest of our food as quickly as we could. It was getting late and I hadn't even looked at the descent instructions. When we finally did look at them we realized the "East Ledges Descent" was fairly complicated and that the possibility of an epic during the descent was almost a foregone conclusion. The only other option we had was to hike eight miles down the Yosemite Falls trail. We decided, rather quickly, that would be our best option.

We had to hike upward a little way to get to where the trail was. It felt strange to walk after being in the vertical world for so long. Once arriving at the trail we somehow took a left when we should have taken a right. We wound up on the Tamarack Flat trail. Once we realized our error, we reversed our direction and started making for the summit again. By this time it was getting dark, we were out of food and our down sleeping bags were sopping wet. I noticed there was wood (for a fire) where we were, so we stopped for yet another bivy.

Fifth Bivy

Making a fire was not easy. Ross's first attempts at a fire failed. All the wood was wet. So I painstakingly propped up a lot of kindling and wood into the form of a tepee. I had a cube of fire starter that I placed in the middle. I then lit our pocket rocket stove and turned it upside down (at which point it became a flame thrower) that was probably not very safe, but then again neither is hypothermia. It worked! We had a roaring fire. We finished off the rest of our vodka and became completely wasted. I curled up around the fire and passed out. It was the first time in four days that I was warm when I went to sleep. Unfortunately, I woke up a couple of hours later freezing my ass off, because the fire had died out. I positioned myself right next to the coals and was able to doze off between bouts of shivering until morning.

Hiking out

I woke up shivering, with a massive hangover and an empty stomach. We got going fairly quickly as there was nothing to eat. During the hike down, Ross found two energy bars he squirreled away which provided a minimal amount of sustenance. We hiked back up to the summit and quickly found the Yosemite Falls trail. We figured it would be a fairly easy decent on a good trail.

After hiking for about a half of a mile we encountered a thick snow pack and lost the trail. I dropped my pack and hiked back to where I knew the trail was. I then hiked back and still couldn't find the trail. So we had to post hole through deep snow for a few miles. This was pretty brutal hiking considering the condition we were in. More than a few times I felt like ditching the haul bag. More than once I looked down to see fresh bear tracks. At least we were not alone. We knew we were generally going in the correct direction but were never certain exactly where we were until we reached the river that creates Yosemite Falls. After reaching the river, it was just a few more miles of hiking. We arrived at Camp 4 at about one o'clock in the afternoon. We cracked open some warm Guinness. We did it!

After thoughts

Hauling went a lot smoother every time we could get the bag out on to the face. We needed better bivy sacks, more master cams (aliens would have been even better) and a more adequate reconnaissance of the decent. We definitely needed a better system of eating during the climb. We would starve all day and then eat lunch on a bivy ledge as the sun was setting. We would then eat dinner five minutes later.

Another near disaster happened on our first attempt to climb the Nose. On one of the rappels from Dolt Tower I had to do a pretty lengthy pendulum swing to reach the next rappel anchors. When Ross followed on rappel he clipped a piece of rotten tat for a directional. Neither one of us noticed that this was a really bad idea until it was too late. While pulling the rope to do the next rappel, the knot that connected our two ropes got stuck in the directional tat. I immediately realized that making that one mistake put us in a terribly dangerous situation. We further realized rather quickly that there were only two options: either ascend the rope to free the knot or call for a rescue. To make matters worse, the rope that needed to be ascended was our static haul line - not a good rope to take a potential 250 foot fall. Ross bravely ascended

the rope with the knot jammed on the rotten tat. Luckily, the tat held. He was able to free the knot and we were able to continue our descent.

The scariest thing about this event happened two weeks later during our second attempt to climb the Nose. While Ross was entering the Stovelegs, he passed the tat that he had jumared off two weeks previously. After barely touching the tat it completely fell out of the wall!!!

Gear list

El cap pig weighed 100lbs at the start of the summit push

Metolius big wall racking harness

113 carabineers (86 wire gates, 14 small locking and 13 large locking)

2 sets of offset nuts

C3s doubles 000,0 single 00

Master cams 00 - 3

C4s singles .3 and 5 doubles .4-4 triples .5-1

Cam hooks 2 (didn't use them)

Blue/red ball nut

16 24in slings

4 48in slings

Pro traction

Backup mini trac pulley

1 ascender

2 gri gris

2 Atc guides

2 nut tools

2 Fifi hooks

Metolius 4 loop gear sling

4 hero loops (a couple more would have been better)

10 mm haul line (60 meter)

10.2 lead line (60 meter)

8 mm lower out line (60 feet)

4 rope bags (we used rei micro travel tote bags)

rap gloves, auto block

2 10 foot pieces of 8 mil cord pre tied off

5 daisies (1 for the haul bag)
4 pocket aiders
Metolius El cap haul bag
Brown falcon (Metoilius waste case)
1 sleeping pad cut in half
2 sleeping bags
Bivy sacks
Hand warmers
8 wag bags
25 liters of water
24 lbs of food
1 34 oz Platypus
Head lamps + extra batteries
Cameras extra batteries
climbing shoes
Cell phone
Sunscreen
Sun glasses
Wall shoes
6 trash compactor bags
Duct tape
Accessory cord
Knife
Fleece
Lightweight rain gear
Down belay vest

Daily food intake per person (3070)

| | Calories |
|------------------|----------|
| 3 Exel Gels | 300 |
| 2 Powerbars | 440 |
| 1 V8 | 030 |
| 8 ounces of Spam | 720 |
| 1 Fruit cup | 080 |
| 6 Tortillas | 900 |
| 6 ounces Pbnj | 600 |