For optional chapter on Fast Climbs

EL CAPITAN

The Beta for Doing *The Nose-in-a-Day*

One of the finest routes in the world, *The Nose* on El Capitan, offers pitch after pitch of high-quality climbing, exposure, thrills, and perfect rock — it's got it all! For many, *The Nose* is a three- or four-day climb of a lifetime, but for a growing number of others, the goal is to do its 3000′ in one day (aka doing *The Nose-in-a-day*).

This task requires being adept at all facets of rock climbing. Although a technical ability of only 5.11 is necessary, a potential *Nose-in-a-day* climber should be able to cruise over semi-difficult rock (hard 5.10 and moderate 5.11) confidently, swiftly, and efficiently. Plus, he/she should be able to deal effortlessly with ropes, anchors, racks, belays, and a pack. *The Nose-in-a-day* requires a special breed of climber, one who has the wall climber's ability to improvise and the free climber's ability to cruise.

Much of the route can be most efficiently climbed "French-free," a technique much akin to modern-day hang-dogging, only quicker. A typical "French-free" section on *The Nose* entails running it out 20′ on 5.10, placing a piece, grabbing it, yarding past, running it out again, and so on. On easier ground, pure free climbing is best. "Whatever's fastest" is the rule, but keep in mind that haste makes waste — unnecessary energy expenditure is sure to catch up. On a long route like *The Nose*, maintaining steady pace boils down to speed.

Only five sections require aiders; none are longer than 60′, and they total less than 250′. Nonetheless, good aid skills are a must.

The System. Although *The Nose* was originally done in a day by a party of three, improved techniques and gear have made a two-man team most effective. Assuming both members want an equal share of the leads, it is most efficient to alternate leading "blocks" of pitches (six or so) at a time. The second jumars each pitch carrying the pack. Actually, jumaring with the pack is more strenuous and exhausting than leading; therefore, the best scenario would have a fast climber leading the entire route, and a gorilla with 30″ biceps merrily jugging every pitch. The block system works because the leader can stay focused in "lead-mode," and get a rest after each lead, whereas swapping leads forces the second to go directly from jumaring to leading with no rest.

With the block system, it is ideal for team members to switch ends of the rope after each lead. This is most speedily affected by having permanently tied loops at either end, each climber affixing the rope to his harness via a locking carabiner (two opposed locking carabiners are safer).

After leading a pitch, the leader's first job is to tie off the rope (*The Nose* has predominantly fixed belays) and

Photo: Michael Benge

shout "off-belay, jumar when ready." The second immediately starts jumaring and cleaning, securely tied in to his jumars with daisy chains. When seconding a block of pitches, never unclip from the jumar/daisy-chain setup. As the second nears the belay, the leader should be prepared to immediately begin the next pitch, needing only the rack and a belay. When the second arrives, he transfers the cleaned rack to the leader, unclips his end of the rope from his harness (the jumars are his anchor), and gives it to the leader, who then exchanges it for his anchored end. The second then puts the leader on belay, and the vertical quest continues. The second should clip into the anchored end at some point.

With a coordinated effort between partners, the changeover at belays shouldn't take more than a couple minutes; many things can be done to speed things up. For example, the second should keep the rack organized while cleaning so reracking at the belay is kept to a minimum. When the second reaches the belay, he should immediately relinquish the rack to the leader, and then prepare for the belay. The belayer's setup time should never exceed the leader's prepartation time. Changeovers must be kept to a frantic minumum.

Also, belays can be partially cleaned as the leader is setting up the higher belay. Changeovers are most easily done at ledges. On aid sections, clip the aiders into a free biner on the rack so they're ready for clipping the next piece. Also, it's more efficient if the leader remains independent of the belayer; that is, if the leader wants tension, he should clip directly into a piece with a fifi hook. Of course, the belayer is needed for pendulums and tension traverses. Dozens of other little "tricks" are best learned through experience. Always be aware of maximizing efficiency.

Simul-climbing is a time-saving method, albeit a dangerous one. It involves both members climbing at the same time with gear placed by the leader as the only protection, i.e. no fixed belay. Therefore, this technique should be used only by very competent climbers at a level well below their limit. The following scenario on "How to Climb The Route" recommends simul-climbing in only two 30′ sections. More simul-climbing can be incorporated, but is not recommended; although it can save time, simul-climbing may not be energy efficient because the second is forced to free climb with the pack, perhaps at an uncomfortable rythym.

If there are parties above on the route, you'll likely need to pass. However, this is a difficult skill to master, requiring courtesy and patience. It may be impossible to pass for several pitches; graceful passing requires that a faster party be aware of natural breaks in the route, so when the opportunity arises, it can sneak by. It is the faster party's responsibility to minimize delaying the slower party.

Training. The best training for *The Nose-in-a-day* is doing long routes and climbing all day on the crags, especially those with approaches. Obviously, it's best to do a lot of climbing with your *Nose-in-a-day* partner to become familiar with each other's climbing style. Also, soloing is an excellent way to "move" and find your natural rhythm. Below is a list of good training routes. The hours in parenthesis are my times on these routes: they are given as a gauge — the same pace should break 12 hours on the Nose. *Routes Climbed Alternating Leads.* Sentinel: *Chouinard-Herbert, Steck Salathé, West Face* (4-5 hrs, 1hr to base). El Capitan: *West*

What To Bring.

Two gear slings — one per person
Rack (see topo)
Personal gear — harness, shoes, chalk-bag, Muntner locking biner, 3" daisy loop with fifi hook attached-tied to harness (optional)
One 10mm-11mm x 165' rope (180' is advantageous)
One 7mm x 165' rope (optional — for retreat and occasional pack hauling)
One pack
Water — amount depends on conditions; 1 gallon per person is probably maximum.
Food — easily digestible energy food (like Jack LaLane bars!)
One belay/rappel device (to be shared — also know the Muntner hitch)
One pair jumars w/aiders and daisy chains attached
One pair lightweight aiders (1/2" aiders fit in a pocket)
Warm clothes (optional — in case you don't make it)
Headlamp(s) (optional)

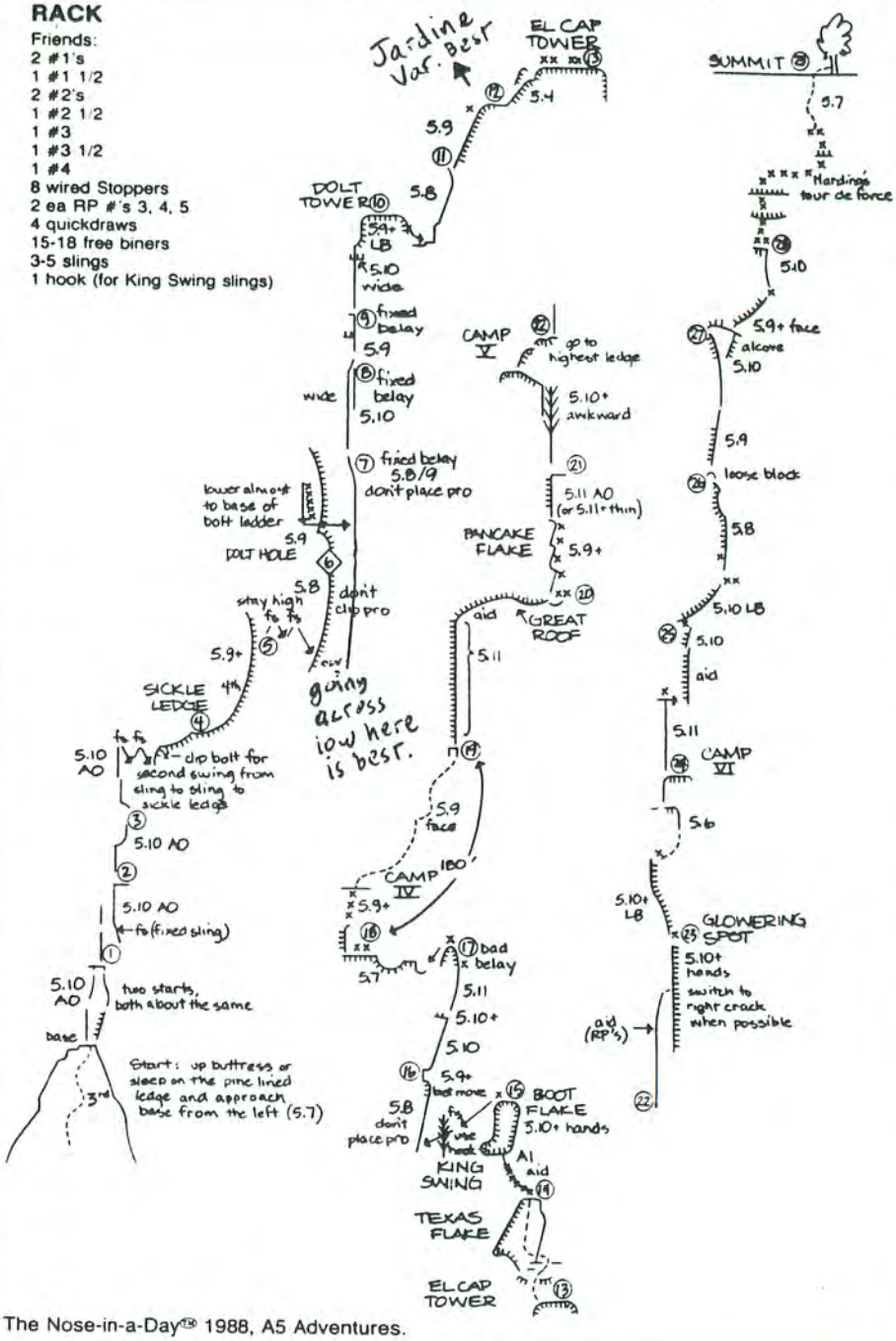
How to Climb The Route.

Pitches1-4: These can be done in less than an hour. French-free.
Pitch 5: Some simul-climbing is required. As soon as the leader clips into belay, the second jumars.
Pitch 6: Stay high, no pro to Dolt Hole so second can swing across easily.
Pitch 7: Aiders optional for bolt-ladder, lower to small roof, swing to Stovelegs, no pro to belay so second can swing across (after lowering a bit).
Pitch 8-10: Stovelegs — probably the most strenuous part of the route. Perhaps another Pitch can be eliminated with long Pitches, but then the benefit of fixed belays is lost.
Pitch 10-13: Easy to El Cap Tower. Belay second (instead of jumaring) on Pitch 13.
Pitch 14: Texas Flake, no pro, leader swings rope outside of Texas Flake for second (strenuous jumar).
Pitch 15: First part — aid (first time aiders are needed). Second part — 5.10+ hands, 2-2.5 Friends.
Pitch 16: King Swing. Use a hook on the slings mid-way, then flip it off after second swing. No pro to belay (except maybe for the last move — then unclip it) so second can lower out easier. (Possible with one rope)
Pitch 17: Hard free-climbing, bad belay.
Pitch 18: Boulder hopping, jingus for the second.
Pitch 19: 180' simul-climbing.
Pitch 20: Great Roof: first part goes mostly free, aid under roof (aiders).
Pitch 21: 5.9+ flake, French-free last 20' section.
Pitch 22: Awkward, go to highest Camp V ledge.
Pitch 23: Aid (aiders) — RP's. Switch to right crack and free climb after 50'.
Pitch 24: All free to Camp VI.
Pitch 25: Overhanging hands, then tension to right crack — aid (aiders) for 30'. Then free to belay.
Pitch 26: All free.
Pitch 27: All free.
Pitch 28: To bolt ladder.
Pitch 29: Harding's bolt ladder — aid (aiders) to summit.

The Nose-in-a-Day (VI 5.11 A0)

RACK

Friends:
2 #1's
1 #1 1/2
2 #2's
1 #2 1/2
1 #3
1 #3 1/2
1 #4
8 wired Stoppers
2 ea RP #'s 3, 4, 5
4 quickdraws
15-18 free biners
3-5 slings
1 hook (for King Swing slings)



The Nose-in-a-Day® 1988, A5 Adventures.

Face (5 1/2hrs, 1hr approach). Washington Column: *Astroman* (Valley to Valley, 5 1/2hrs). Half Dome: *The Autobahn*, *Reggae Route* (5 1/2hrs). *Routes Done In Nose-in-a-day* Style (second jumars). Washington's Column: *Direct South Face* (4hrs). Lost Arrow Spire: *Lost Arrow Direct* (8hrs). *Soloable Routes.* Higher Cathedral Rock: *Northeast Buttress* (hard and scary), then *Braille Book*. Half Dome: *Snake Dike* — the approach is the main training benefit. Washington Column: *Direct Route* (5.7+). Manure Pile Buttress: *Nutcracker* (my record of 8 minutes, 47 seconds still stands — 600').

Pre-climb preparation. Three days before: Climb a long route. Two days before: Loosen up on some moderate soloing; maybe an easy run around the Valley loop. Eat well, and get lots of sleep. One day before: Complete rest, stretch, breathe, psyche. Carbo load — I like to eat a lot of semi-salty pasta and vegetables, along with frequent doses of potassium gluconate which helps endurance. Also, drink as much water as you can. Sleeping at the base the night before always improves my psyche. (Note: Fixing pitches is generally considered bogus; the whole route isn't being done in a day.) If you want the benefit of a bright moon, make sure to go 3-5 days before a full moon. Then it will be shedding light at sundown. Good luck!

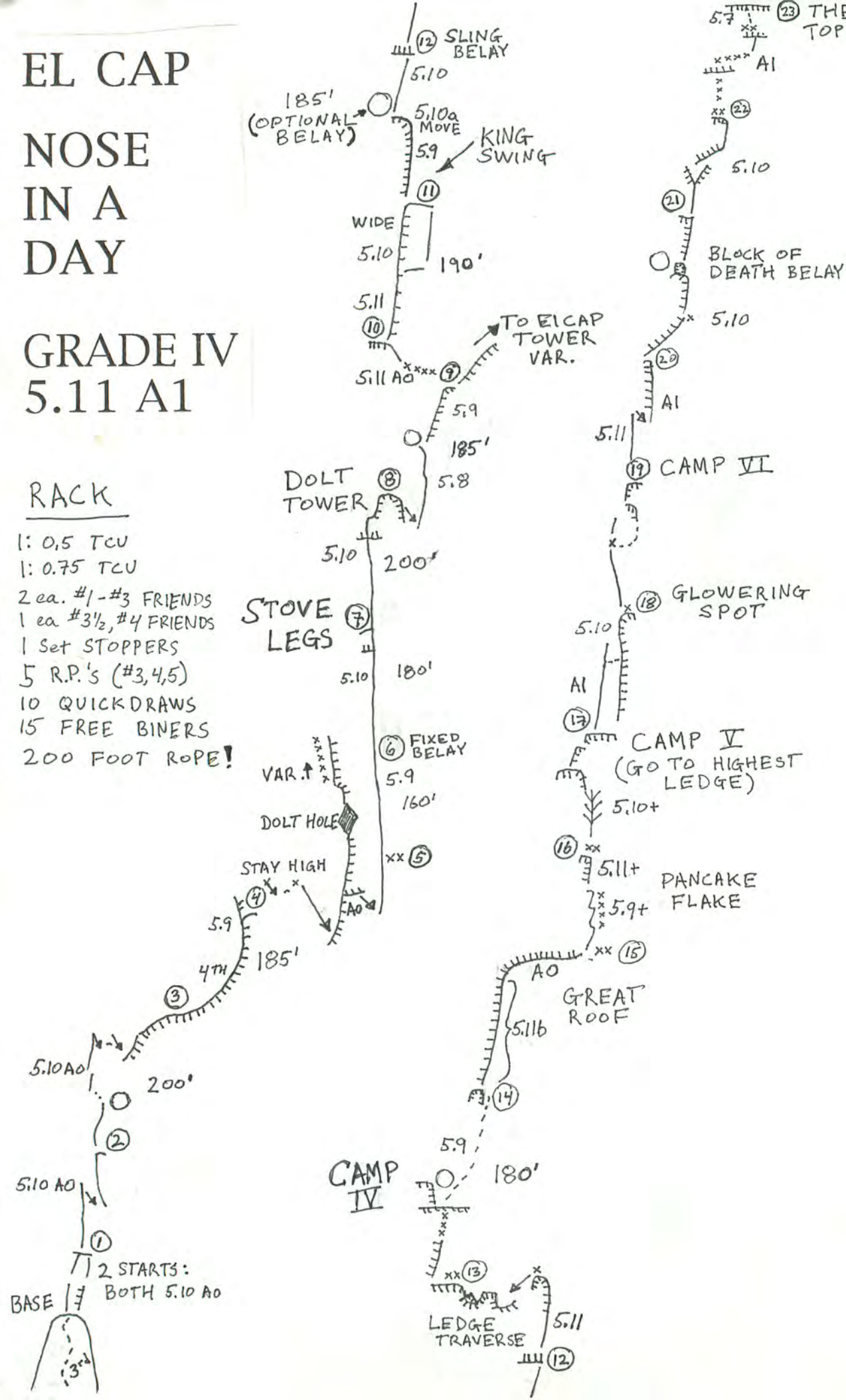
—*John Middendorf IV*

EL CAP NOSE IN A DAY

GRADE IV 5.11 A1

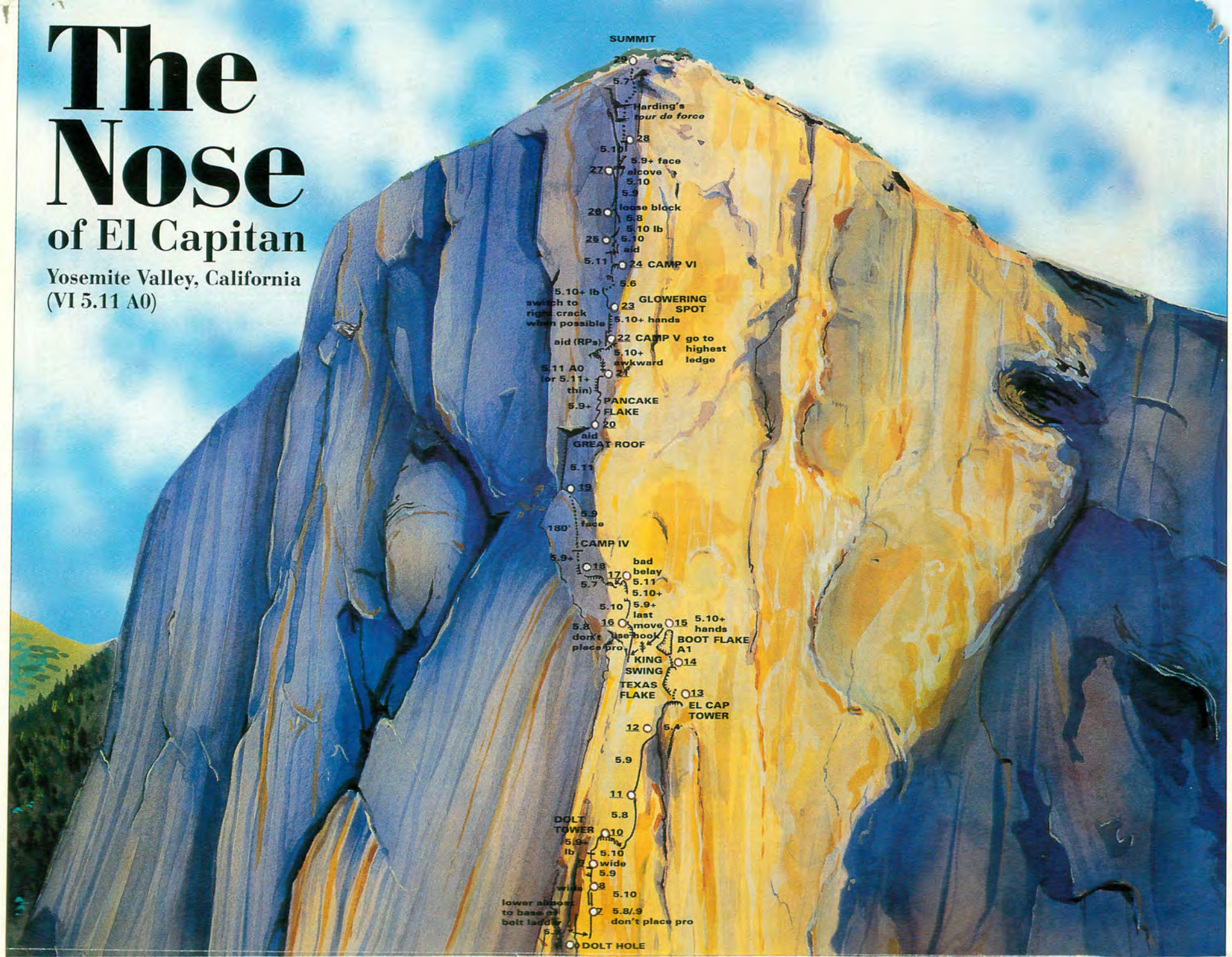
RACK

1: 0.5 TCU
1: 0.75 TCU
2 ea. #1-#3 FRIENDS
1 ea #3½, #4 FRIENDS
1 Set STOPPERS
5 R.P.'s (#3,4,5)
10 QUICKDRAWS
15 FREE BINERS
200 FOOT ROPE!



The Nose of El Capitan

Yosemite Valley, California
(VI 5.11 A0)



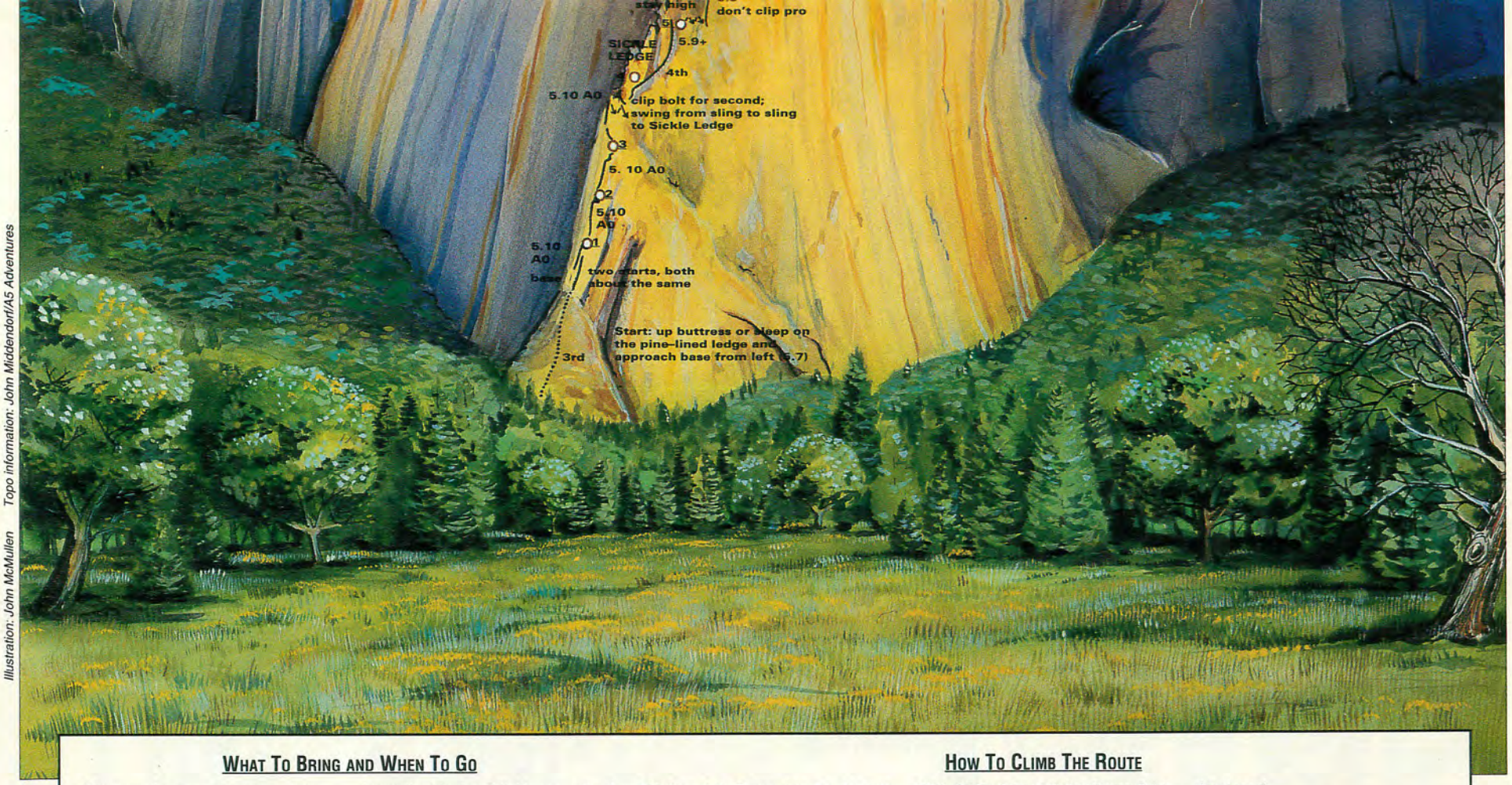


Illustration: John McMullen Topo information: John Middendorf/A5 Adventures

What To Bring and When To Go

Two gear loops — one per person

Personal gear — harness, shoes, chalk bag, Muntner locking biner, 3" daisy loop with fifi hook attached, tied to harness (optional)

Rack — Friends: 2 – #1, 1 – #1 1/2, 2 – #2, 1 – #2 1/2, 1 – #3, 1 – #3 1/2, 1 – #4; 8 wired Stoppers; RP #3, 4, 5 (2 each); 4 quickdraws; 15–18 free biners; 3–5 slings; 1 hook (for King Swing)

Ropes — One 10mm or 11mm X 165-foot rope (180 feet is advantageous); one 7 mm X 165-foot rope (optional; for retreat and occasional pack hauling)

Other gear — One pack; one belay/rappel device (to be shared; also know the Muntner hitch); one pair of jumars w/ aiders and daisy chains attached; one pair lightweight aiders (1/2" aiders fit in a pocket)

Water — Amount depends on conditions; 1 gallon per person is probably the maximum.

Food — Easily digestible, high energy (fruit, bagels, energy bars).

Optional — Warm clothes and headlamp in case you don't make it.

Seasons — May through July are best. August and September can get exceedingly hot; fall days grow shorter and colder, with more late–afternoon thundershowers.

How To Climb The Route

Pitches 1-4: These can be done in less than an hour. French-free.

Pitch 5: Some simul-climbing is required. As soon as the leader clips into belay, the second jumars.

Pitch 6: Stay high, no pro to Dolt Hole so the second can swing across easily.

Pitch 7: Aiders optional for bolt ladder, lower to small roof, swing to Stovelegs, no pro to belay so second can swing across (after lowering a bit).

Pitch 8-10: Stovelegs. Probably the most strenuous part of the route. A pitch can be eliminated with long pitches, but then the benefit of fixed belays is lost.

Pitch 10-13: Easy to El Cap Tower. Belay second (instead of jumaring) on Pitch 13.

Pitch 14: Texas Flake, no pro, leader swings rope outside of Texas Flake for second (strenuous jumar).

Pitch 15: First part is aid (first time aiders are needed). Second part is 5.10+ hands, #2–2.5 Friends.

Pitch 16: King Swing. Use a hook on the slings midway, then flip it off after second swing. No pro to belay (except maybe for the last move, then unclip it) so second can lower out easier. (Possible with one rope)

Pitch 17: Hard free climbing, bad belay.

Pitch 18: Boulder hopping, jingus for the second.

Pitch 19: 180 feet of simul-climbing.

Pitch 20: Great Roof. First part goes mostly free, aid under roof (aiders).

Pitch 21: 5.9 + flake, French-free last 20-foot section.

Pitch 22: Awkward, go to highest Camp V ledge.

Pitch 23: Aid (aiders), RPs. Switch to right crack and free climb after 50 feet.

Pitch 24: All free to Camp VI.

Pitch 25: Overhanging hands, then tension to right crack; aid (aiders) for 30 feet, then free to belay.

Pitch 26-28: All free.

Pitch 29: Bolt ladder (aiders) to summit.

A5 ADVENTURES

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NOSE-IN-A-DAY

Doing the Nose Route on El Cap in a day (a.k.a. "doing the Nose-in-a-day") is a great adventure. Pitch after pitch of high-quality climbing, exposure, thrills... it's got it all! Definitely one of the finest routes in the world: 3000 feet of excellent climbing, all of which can be done in one day.

To do the Nose-in-a-day, a minimum level of climbing experience is required. Although a technical ability of only 5.11 is necessary, a potential Nose-in-a-day climber should be able to cruise over semi-difficult rock (i.e. moderate 5.11 and hard 5.10) confidently, swiftly, and efficiently. Plus he/she should have an innate ability to effortlessly deal with the rope(s), anchors, racks, belays, and the pack (easier said than done). I feel that the Nose-in-a-day requires a special breed of climber, having known a substantial number of 5.12ers (and 5.13ers) who would find it impossible, despite their technical prowess. The Nose-in-a-day requires the wall-climbers ability to improvise, combined with the free-climbers ability to cruise.

Much of the climbing on the Nose is most efficiently done utilizing the "French-free" technique (much akin to modern-day hangdogging, only quicker). French-free consists of getting up a pitch as fast as possible, with a minimum of effort. A typical french-free section on the Nose would entail running it out 20 feet on 5.10, placing a piece, grabbing and yarding past it, and continuing. On easier ground, no grabbing is necessary, and, on the 5.11 sections, more grabbing is often quicker and more energy-efficient. "Whatever's fastest" is the rule, yet keep in mind that haste makes waste, and unnecessary energy expenditure is sure to catch up to you. On a route as long as the Nose, Pace and Rhythm become just as important as speed.

Aid: there are only five sections of pure aid (where aiders are necessary), none longer than 60 feet, and all-in-all totalling less than 250 feet during the entire 3000 foot route. The rest is either pure-free or french-free.

What to Bring

Two gear slings--one per person
Rack (see Topo)
Personal gear--harness, shoes, chalk-bag, Müntner locking biner, 3"daisy loop with fifi attached-tie to harness (optional).
1 10mm-11mm Rope--165' (180' could be advantageous).
1 7mm x 165' Rope (optional--for retreat and occasional pack-hauling).
1 Nose-in-a-day Pack (or equivalent)
Water--amount depends on conditions; 1 gallon per person may not be excessive, though 1 gallon total will often be enough.
Food--easily digestible energy food (like Jack LaLane bars!)
1 Belay/rappel device (to be shared. Also, know the müntner hitch).
1 Pair Jumars w/ aiders and daisies attached.
1 Pair lightweight aiders.
Warm clothes (optional)--in case you don't make it.
Headlamp(s)--ditto.

The System

A well coordinated team of two is most efficient. Though the Nose was originally done in a day with a party of three, techniques (and gear) have evolved making the two-man team best suited for the experience. Assuming both members of the team want an equal share of the leads, it is most efficient if the leader leads a "block" of pitches at a time (say, six or so pitches in a row) before the team alternates leaders. Thus for each block, one man will lead (the "leader") and one will jumar with the pack (the "second"). (Actually jumaring with the pack is more strenuous and exhausting than leading; thus, the optimal method would be for a fast climber to lead the entire route, and someone with 30-inch biceps to follow the whole thing). The block system is more efficient than alternating leads, because the leader can remain in the "lead-mode" for a period of time, and gets a rest after each lead; most importantly, however, the second doesn't have to go directly from jumaring to leading with no rest (except when there is a change of leaders).

With the block system, it is most efficient if the leader and second can switch ends of the rope after each lead. This is most speedily done if each climber clips a permanently tied loop at each end of the rope into a locking biner (two opposed locking biners would be safer) on his harness.

The block system goes thus: leader leads, gets to belay, immediately ties off rope (the Nose is predominantly fixed belays), shouts, "off-belay, jumar when ready" (or equivalent). The second immediately starts jumaring (with the pack), cleans the pitch (remembering to be tied in with the jumar daisies--in fact, when the second is seconding a block of pitches, he is never unclipped from the jumar/daisy set-up). As the second nears the upper belay, the leader has gotten a rest, and is prepared to immediately start leading the next pitch, needing only the rack and a belay. So, when the second arrives at the upper belay, he'll transfer the rack he just cleaned to the leader, unclip his end of the rope from his harness (the jumars are his anchor), give his end to the leader (who will clip it into his harness, and unclip his previous end). The second then puts the leader on belay, and the leader continues the vertical quest. (the second should clip into the other end at some point.)

The whole process at the belays shouldn't take more than a couple minutes. This, however, requires a coordinated effort between partners, and many things can be done to speed things up. For example, as he/she cleans, the second should keep the rack organized so reracking at the belay is kept to a minimum. Other: belays can be partially cleaned as the leader is setting up the higher belay. Leader changeovers are most easily done at ledges. On aid sections, clip the aiders into a free-biner on the rack, so for clipping into the next piece, the free-biner and aider go as one. Also, I've found it to be more efficient if the leader remains independent of the belayer; that is, if the leader wants tension, he should clip into the piece directly (with the fifi)--of course, the belayer is needed for pendelums and tension traverses. And dozens of other little "tricks" that are best learned through experience. Always be aware of ways to maximize efficiency, and you're sure to do well.

Specific Techniques (see Topo)

Pitches 1 to 4: These can easily be done in less than an hour. French Free!

Pitch 5: Some simul-climbing is required. As soon as the leader clips into belay, the second jumars.

Pitch 6: Stay high, no pro to Dolt Hole, so second can swing across easily.

Pitch 7: Aiders optional for bolt-ladder, lower to small roof, swing to Stove-legs, no pro to belay so second can swing across (after lowering a bit).

Pitch 8-10: Stovelegs--probably the most strenuous part of the route. Perhaps another pitch can be eliminated with long pitches, but then the benefit of fixed belays is lost.

Pitch 10-13: Easy, to El Cap Tower. Belay second (instead of jumaring) on pitch 13.

Pitch 14: Texas Flake, no pro, leader swings rope outside of Texas Flake for second (strenuous jumar).

Pitch 15: First part--aid (first time the aiders are needed). Second part--5.10+ hands, 2-2½ friends.

Pitch 16: King Swing. Use a hook on the slings mid-way, then flip it off after second swing. No pro to belay (except maybe for the last move--then unclip it) so second can lower out easier.

Pitch 17: Hard free-climbing, bad belay.

Pitch 18: Boulder hopping, jingus for the second.

Pitch 19: 180' simul-climbing.

Pitch 20:Great Roof: first part goes mostly free, Aid under roof(aiders).

Pitch 21: 5.9+ flake, french-free second section (after stance).

Pitch 22: Awkward, go to highest Camp V ledge.

Pitch 23:Aid (aiders)--RP's. Switch to right crack and free-climb after 50'

Pitch 24: All free, to Camp VI.

Pitch 25: Overhanging hands, then tension over to right crack--aid(aiders) for 30'. Then free to belay.

Pitch 26: All free.

Pitch 27: All free.

Pitch 28: to bolt ladder.

Pitch 29: Harding's bolt ladder--aid(aiders). To Summit.

Training

The best training for the Nose-in-a-day is to do long routes, and climb all day on the crags (the best crags are the ones with approaches, i.e. Arch Rock). Obviously, it's best to do a lot of climbing with your Nose-in-a-day partner, so as to "know" eachother's climbing style. Also, soloing is an excellent way to 'move' and find your natural rhythm.

Below is a list of some good training routes. The hours in parenthesis are my times an these routes: they are given as a guage--the same pace should break 12 hours on the Nose.

*Routes done in "swing-style", both people climb.

Sentinel: Chouinard-Herbert, Steck Salathé, West Face (4-5 hrs.1hr.to bse
West Face, El Cap (5½ hours, 1 hour approach).
Astroman (Valley to Valley: 5½ hours).
The Autobahn, SW Buttress of Half Dome,5.11+, 10 pitches.
Half Dome, NW Face, Reggae Route (5½ hours).

*Routes done in Nose-in-a-day style,second jumars.

Washington Column, Direct South Face (4 hours).
Lost Arrow Direct (8 hours).

*Soloable Routes

N.E. Buttress of Higher (hard and scary), then Braille Book.
Snake Dike--the approach is the main training benefit.
Washington's Column, Direct Route (5.7+).
Nutcracker (my record of 8 minutes, 47 seconds still stands--600').

Pre-Climb Preparation

- Three days before: longish route.
- Two days before: loosen up on some moderate soloing, maybe a run around the loop. Eat well, and get lots of sleep.
- One day before:complete rest, stretch, breathe, psyche. Carbo load.

Sleeping at the base the night before the route always improves my psyche. (Note: fixing pitches is generally considered bogus, as the whole route isn't being done in a day). If you want the benefit of a bright moon, make sure to go three-five days before the full-moon, then it will be shedding light at sundown.

Good Luck!

--John Middendorf

Alterations to the Nose in a Day Article (attached copy has reference #'s)

A. Replace: "remembering to be" with "securely"

1. Replace: "unclips the other end" with "then exchanges it for his anchored end"

2. Replace: "other" with "anchored".

3. Insert: When the second reaches the belay, he should immediately relinquish the rack to the leader, and then prepare for the belay (rope management). Spontaneous lead action is necessary for the continuance of pace. The belayer's set-up time should never exceed the leader's preparation time. Changeovers must be kept to a frantic minimum.

4. Replace Paragraph:

Simul-climbing is a time-saving method, albeit a dangerous one. It involves both members climbing at the same time with the gear placed by the leader as the only protection, i.e. no fixed belay. Therefore the technique should be used only by very competent climbers at a level well below their limit. The following "How to climb the route" scenario describes simul-climbing in only two sections, each requiring about 30 feet of simul-climbing. More simul-climbing can be incorporated, though it is not really recommended: although time-efficient, simul-climbing is generally not energy-efficient, because the second must strenuously free-climb with a pack on, and at a pace with may not coincide with his own rythym.

5. Insert the following two paragraphs:

The Nose-in-a-day beta described herein is not meant to be a definitive guide. Rather, it is merely a description of the gear and techniques used by Dave Schultz and myself on our shortest-day-of-the-year (Dec. 21) ascent of the Nose. Optimal speed-climbing techniques varies with conditions, nature of the rock, and team abilities. The climber is solely responsible for proper on-the-spot decision making.

A note on passing ettiquitte: Graceful passing of slower parties is a difficult skill to master. The lack of such skill often results in bitter verbal battles on the vertical realm. A slow party ahead can significantly hinder a fast party's progress. Often it becomes impossible to pass for many pitches. Notwithstanding, subtle natural breaks occur in any long-route climbing situation. Graceful passing requires the faster party to be keenly aware of such breaks, and sneak by. It is the faster party's responsibility to minimize the slower party's delay incurred by the pass (for those highest on a route have the natural right of way). Mutual cooperation aids a pass, thus courtesy and patience become the faster party's main tactics.

6. Add: (½" web aiders easily fit in a pocket).

7. Add: (possible with one rope).

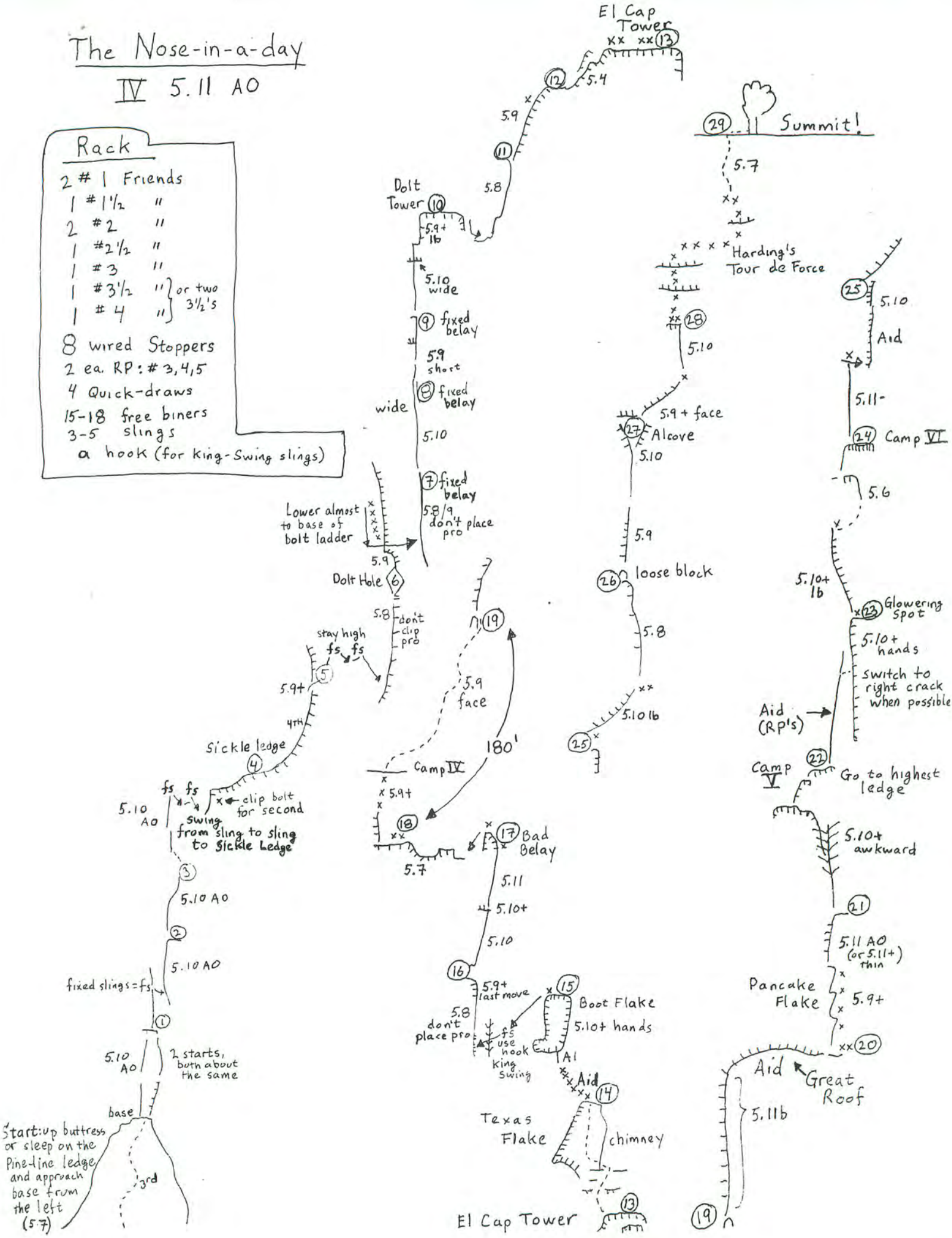
8. Replace: "second" with "last 20 feet"

9. Insert: "light"

10. Insert after "Carbo load.": An effective (for me) diet for the day before consist of large quantities of semi-salty pasta, vegetables, and frequent doses of Potassium Gluconate (helps endurance). Also, drink gallons and gallons of water. A caffiene jolt in the morning and a few malto-dextrin type candies (sweettarts) should trigger a positive energy flow.

The Nose-in-a-day

IV 5.11 AO

Rack

- 2 #1 Friends
- 1 #1½ "
- 2 #2 "
- 1 #2½ "
- 1 #3 "
- 1 #3½ " } or two 3½'s
- 1 #4 " }
- 8 wired Stoppers
- 2 ea. RP: #3, 4, 5
- 4 Quick-draws
- 15-18 free biners
- 3-5 slings
- a hook (for King-Swing slings)