

A FROZEN WORLD NUMBER 2, 2004-05 SEASON

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“A hard white frost last night. A clear & pleasant morning.” Sgt. John Ordway with the Lewis and Clark expedition near Washburn, North Dakota, November 9, 1804

“The new country was rich and wild.” Cormac McCarthy, *The Crossing*.

“No more of this ice dagger bullshit for me.” Yvon Chouinard, *Climbing Ice*.

“The white flags toppled over... yet they rose again, as other men pressed forward to die for Allah’s sacred cause... It was a terrible sight, for as yet they had not hurt us at all, and it seemed an unfair advantage.”
Winston Churchill, speaking of the Mahdist forces at the battle of Omdurman, Sudan, 1898.

At right: Rich Purnell looking to get "Lucky" (M11) at Vail, Colorado. Photo: Rob Cordery-Cotter.



Hello!

Welcome to A FROZEN WORLD, the world’s premier mixed and leashless climbing newsletter. You may now download A FROZEN WORLD off the **Climbing** (magazine) website. Of course, if you have requested a subscription I will continue to mail you your own personal copy, but if you have friends who would like a copy please feel free to refer them to Climbing.com, it can be found under ice conditions for **Colorado**.

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Rob contemplates the void on “Mixed Emotions” (M6+ gear!), Rocky Mountain National Park, Colorado. Photo: Cordery-Cotter collection.

Conditions

Conditions in Rocky Mountain National Park are at present excellent with many routes in that have not come into conditions in years. Early autumn storms followed by warmer sunny periods have led to extensive melt, drip and freeze. The list of routes is too extensive to recount, be aware that days

can now vary from balmy to near arctic. Also, take heed that things come and go rapidly in the Park so if your route comes in make haste up there, sublimation and frantic top-ropers can make short work of any ice line. Vail should be coming along in the next several weeks as temperatures drop into the 20s and teens (Fahrenheit) overnight. Ouray still has some distance to cover as well, look for things to shape up there in the Skylight area around early December.

Leashless Explained

Leashless climbing has come a long way since the introduction of the Grivel Machine in 2001. Leashless climbing as a mode of transport evolved out of the Ice World Cup series of ice-climbing competitions in Europe. The story goes that exhausted climbers climbing with leashes while on lead had to be rescued when they became too blasted to free themselves from their last placement. Whatever the case, gear companies like Charlet-Moser and Grivel soon began fabricating (then manufacturing) tools specifically adapted to the demands of leashless climbing for the competition scene. These tools featured a grip or handle that the climber could hold on to, the tool now no longer required a leash to keep the climber adherent to the tool. About the same time high standard bolted dry tool routes were being established with leashes. These routes required a high degree of physical stamina and technical skill to achieve. In 2002 when Italian mixed savant Mauro “**Bubu**” Bolle first climbed “Mission Impossible” (M11) he did so using leashless tools. With leashless tools and high M standards now duly wed, the number of such routes in Europe, the United States and Canada multiplied. In turn, as climbers have gained familiarity and confidence with leashless tools, all manner of mixed, ice and alpine routes now are seeing “leashless” ascents.

The advantages of leashless climbing can be elucidated as follows:

- 1) **Ease of use-** Bolted, on mixed or “dry-tool” type routes where strenuous rock-climbing must be performed using ice tools and crampons leashless tools offer distinct advantages. Having the capacity to “match”, or grip one tool in a sound placement with both hands is often required, or at least advantageous. A climber can then “switch”, the tool placement initially achieved with the left hand now becomes a hold for the right, freeing the left hand up for another reach or to clip a bolt. Pumped arms can be shaken-out by alternating grip, to clip the climber simply lets go of the grip and clips, no tool is left dangling from the wrist. Without the hindrance of the leash, many creative options are possible, the tool can be hooked by the leg or foot, or the heel spur, to achieve a secure rest position for the arms on steep or even terrain (read, cave roofs).
- 2) **Warmth-** Draining of life and warmth from your hands while ice climbing due to the ligature effects of the leash is eliminated by

leashless tools. The ability to lower the arms and more frequently shake out enhances warmth and dissipates the pump.



Anything goes in leashless. Combination hand match and tool-toe-heel lock on "Misery" (M9), Vail Colorado. Climber: RCC. Photo: Cordery-Cotter collection.

- 3) **Injury Prevention-** An excellent way to dislocate someone's shoulder would be to hold onto their ankles while someone else pulls on their wrist. That is essentially what happens when you fall off a mixed route when using a leash, the tool stays put and the rope pulls tight at your waist. When you fall with leashless tools you can just let go, the shoulder is less likely to sustain injury. Without leashes the tools fall clear of the climber and don't windmill around the climber's head and face in a blur of points. Since most leashless designs lack an end spike, a tool that pops suddenly isn't going to cut you, they are also less likely to impale you in a fall.
- 4) **Fun-** Leashless tools are just more fun to use, plain and simple. Climbing is less of a dreary slugfest, because you hold onto the tools the climbing is more tactile, more like rock climbing.
- 5) **Limitations-** I probably wouldn't go charging up *Slipstream* solo with a set of leashless tools. In such a situation the security of the leash to provide a mobile belay is desirable. In a situation where dropping a

tool would be catastrophic, and due to weight considerations carrying spares is not feasible, I might opt for leashed tools. In an environment of extreme cold where heavy gloves or mittens were necessary holding onto tools without leashes is probably not an option. Still, leashless tools are showing up everywhere, their use is strictly a function of the users' capability.

- 6) **Total Dry-** This is the pursuit of dry-tooling as an end in itself rather than as a means to reach interesting free-hanging ice structures or "danglers". Bouldering or climbing where the tools are used in lieu of the hands is now developing into a distinct branch of climbing. Another use of dry tool tactics has been "free-climbing" routes or sections of routes that are too thin to climb with the hands, the tools represent mobile sky-hooks for the climber to advance with, usually up pin-scarred cracks on old aid lines situated on big walls. The possibilities really are without limit, it is up to today's (and tomorrow's) climbers to define what is feasible.
- 7) **Adaptability-** Novices take to leashless tools innately, particularly if they have a gym/rock-climbing background. On a recent day out I watched a friend struggle on a mixed route using ice tools with leashes. When I loaned her my *Fusion* she cruised easily up the same section she had earlier flailed on. "I'm a stronger rock climber than on ice," she told me. The leashless tools more ideally suited her instinctive aptitude for climbing, she performed better and had a more enjoyable experience when using them.
- 8) **Finally-** The decision to "go leashless" represents a commitment of sorts, one really needs to prepare mentally and physically for the climbing and have the time, terrain and partner resources to make it happen. Of course, leashless climbing does not necessarily entail dry-tooling, if you want to climb *Polar Circus* and *Weeping Wall* with leashless tools and not venture onto rock, that is just fine. Should you be inclined to climb both pitches of *Amphibian* with leashes that would be an excellent effort. I for one feel that it is more important that people go out and enjoy the mountains in winter than to get bogged down in equipment issues and ceaseless quibbling over style.

Climb of the Month- “*Mixed Emotions*”, Rocky mountain National Park, Colorado.

Left: Rich Purnell slack-lining on “Mixed Emotions”. Photo: Rob Cordery-Cotter.

Located in the spectacular setting of Colorado’s Rocky Mountain National Park, the trad’ mixed classic *Mixed Emotions* offers superb dry-tooling on colorful granite, steep ice, a scenic approach, and ice! Weighing in at M6+, it should be noted that this attractive route sees more than its share of groveling, retreats and trouser-filling falls. The route traipses in from the left along a deep horizontal crack, before making for the ice up solid hooks on overhanging granite. You will need cams up to a #3 Camalot, short ice screws, and good old-fashioned fortitude. Bear in mind this is a popular route and



that once formed the ice does not renew itself, please make an effort to conserve the ice so other climbers can enjoy this superb line.



Lucky Integral, the hardest M route in Colorado?

My discussion of *Lucky* in the #1 AFW issue drew a response from the route's Author, Rich Purnell. He clarified some of the history associated with this route and the various phases of development it has undergone. I will defer to Rich's own words to shed some light on the development of this impressive route.

“After doing the 3rd ascent of *'Fist Full of Steel'* in Ouray and purportedly the state's hardest line (in fact, a jug haul) I came to believe last year that *Lucky* with the ground up extension and all is the state's (Colorado's) hardest (mixed) route, but nothing here is as hard as *Musashi* and *The Game*¹. As far as I am concerned, until someone repeats *Lucky Integral* (as well as) the other routes in Ouray, etc. and says otherwise, I won't budge on that statement.” – Rich Purnell.

Above: Way back when... Pulsars, big boots and raw ability get put to work on “Lucky” (M11), Vail, Colorado.

Photo: Rob Cordery-Cotter.

¹ *Musashi* by Will Gadd, and *The Game* by Ben Firth are located in the Cineplex (cave) in Alberta, Canada. They are rated M12 and M13 respectively.

In the no.1 issue of AFW I reported that Rich Purnell had completed the *Lucky Integral* at Vail, Colorado adding a series of (4) bolts to connect *Little Thang* (M6+) with *Lucky* to create the ground to *Fang* odyssey of *Lucky Integral*. *Lucky* itself was first bolted by Purnell in the 2001-02 season, he completed his first red-point ascent of this route March 3, 2002 beginning at the *Reptile* (M10) belay and climbing out under the imposing roof behind *Fang* to join up with the ice on *Fang* (WI6). The four bolt section that joins *Little Thang* to *Lucky* was added late in the 2001-02 season shortly after Rich had visited Canada and been repulsed off of *Musashi* in typical arctic conditions. Rich was able to climb *Lucky* with the 4 bolt linkage in April 2002 by jugging to the top of *Little Thang* and beginning there (the ice of *Little Thang* had melted by this point in the season), but despite attempts by Rich to climb the route ground-up in the 2002-03 season (i.e., *Lucky Integral*), he did not complete the ground-up variant of *Lucky Integral* until February of 2004.

It is worth noting that throughout 2001-02 when Purnell began work on *Lucky* and subsequently red-pointed the major roof section he was climbing with *Pulsar* ice tools with leashes, *Nepal Top* mountaineering boots and without the aid of aggressive heel spurs. By the time of the *Lucky Integral* ground-up variant was achieved Purnell was equipped with the new *Mega Ice* mixed bootie replete with very assertive heel spurs, he was also now climbing with the new *Trango* leashless *Madam Hook* tools. One can view the development of *Lucky* as a microcosm of the evolution of mixed climbing, itself.

According to Purnell Colorado lacks (at present) mixed routes of the caliber of *Musashi*, but that discrepancy is about to be redressed. Look for a “for your eyes only” secrecy clearance level project to go in this season to rival that of any “M” line on the planet. You’ll see it here first, that’s for sure.

More on “to spur or not to spur”

The spur or no spurs topic is like that guy in the white mask and the boiler suit in the *Halloween* movies, no matter how it gets disposed of it just keeps turning up for one more round of mayhem. Apparently **Will Gadd**, Ben Firth and Evgeny were all sufficiently possessed to send *Musashi* (M12) without the use of spurs fitted to their climbing booties (phew!). Gadd and Firth also made a considerable effort on *The Game* (M13) without the spurs but no definitive word yet on how they fared. Some corrections from last issue are called for. **Ines Papert** is not guilty of piloting the first unmanned ascent of *Musashi*. Rather, that distinction falls to Italian mixed mistral Anna Torreta who reportedly flashed the route on her initial attempt (hubba-hubba ding-ding baby you got everything!) *The Game* saw sends by Evgeny and Harry Berger, Berger apparently finishing on the exit moves of neighboring *Rocky Mountain Horror Show* (M11+), an effort that absorbed the punishing cruxes of both routes. Ouray guide **Vince Anderson** who achieved red-point nirvana on *Rocky Mountain Horror Show* this past March suggests that, “It (*Rocky*) has a harder crux but is perhaps less sustained. It would also be a real bear with out spurs because the crux move requires a torque move in a roof.”

He continues, “Many people now feel that the Rocky Mountain Horror show may be harder. Though, it is only rated (M)11+ so it does not attract the crowds that Musashi does.”



Kids, don't try this at home! Vince Anderson taking it easy on "Rock Mountain Horror Show", the Cineplex, Alberta, Canada. Photo: courtesy of Vince Anderson.

Okay, has everybody got all that? Have no fear dear readers, apparently there is a still harder variation lurking amongst the grid of bolts in the Cineplex roof, a *Grande Course* that bisects the above mentioned routes that has as of yet repelled all comers. Watch for it.

Your Letters

I've just come across 'A Frozen World' via the rockclimbing.com forum. As a UK based mixed/ice/dry-tooling enthusiast its what I've been looking for. Instant psyche!
-Andy, somewhere in the UK.

*Rob responds:
Bloody marvelous stuff, that!*

“hello rob.

i also want to mention that last year in march i became the first person to solo secret probation leashless. i am not sure if this route had a solo with leashes (i have found none yet) but it does with leashless tools now.”

-David Roetzal, Vail Colorado.

Rob responds:

Secret Probation was certainly climbed solo in March 1996, I know this because I did so. (Aye, none indeed, luddy! Ya know noowt!) Being 1996 I used mastodon hide leashes lashed to my flint tipped ice tools, my friend “Ogg” witnessed and recorded the event in a cave painting done up in charcoal and red ochre for inclusion in the “Cromagnonia” clothing catalog. No worries, my “Cromagnonia” sabretooth tiger skin underpants kept it all together, piece of piss, really.

Rob,

One thing I wanted to point out concerning your review (of *Washington Ice*, in AFW no.1) revolves around the omissions that you mentioned. The primary reason we didn't cover those particular routes was because they've already been covered to death in Cascade Select Volumes I and II. We believed – with good cause – that anyone who bought our book would already own those two books. As such we decided to explore as many lesser-known objectives as possible.

Jason D. Martin, author of *Washington Ice, A Climbing Guide*. Jason D. Martin and Alex Krawarik, **The Mountaineers Books**.

Again Rob responds:

Indeed, one has to draw the line somewhere in terms of including routes in any guidebook. Still, you wouldn't leave the “Nose” out of a Yosemite guide because it has been “covered to death”. The Big Four North Face routes “four” example are included in “Selected Climbs in the Cascades, Volume 1, second edition²”, they are however also discussed in “Washington Ice”, are they not? Even a line or two to mention the Mt. Snoqualmie and Tooth East Face routes in the preface to the important Snoqualmie Pass area would have sufficed to pique people's interest in these outstanding routes. Besides, a visiting climber doesn't want to buy three books, they want the good stuff all crammed into one book, an objective “Washington Ice” comes tantalizingly close to achieving.

You may contact me, Rob Cordery-Cotter at:

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² Selected Climbs in the Cascades Volum 1 Second Edition, by Jim Nelson and Peter Potterfield. **The Mountaineers Books**, 2003.

