

# A FROZEN WORLD NUMBER 8

30 MARCH 2005

Hello!  
Welcome to  
A FROZEN  
WORLD, the  
world's  
premier  
mixed  
climbing  
newsletter,  
where it is  
always  
winter! In  
this issue I  
will review  
the new  
mixed  
climbing  
bootie from  
Lowa, a  
brilliant new  
ice guide to  
northern  
Italy and of  
course, your  
letters.

*Right: A good  
day to wear  
your helmet.  
RCC setting  
off on **Pitch  
Black**, Vail,  
Colorado.  
Photo:  
Fabrizio  
Zangrilli.*



# First, Conditions!



*Rich Purnell investigating a new route in the Fang cirque, Vail, Colorado. Photo: RCC.*

Spring! A period of unseasonably warm weather several weeks back was followed by some serious winter weather, temperatures are back to seasonal norms. The cirque at Vail saw a burst of late-season activity, the long-dormant Rich Purnell creation **Somanmbulist** at last received several red-point repeats. Colorado Springs Chris Alstrin looking to get the first non-RP ascent managed the sustained and at times scaly dry-tooling out to the rather enormous exit dagger only to blow out an immense plate on the ice and cut loose for a fifty or so footer (he sent the route). Purnell later found another hold that permitted the blank section to be spanned, but failed to reveal this tidbit to the uninitiated. Sensing spring (and meltdown) in the offing I attacked the following week. After breaking two more potential holds replete with yet more frequent flier miles I resolved to simply bypass the entire “lost” section and head straight for the “good” (i.e., one tooth) hold. Using a combination of a leg-bar, heel-toe jams, a bum-drag and much primal grunting I managed the rather engaging reach out the roof, rolled up the rest of the dry-tooling and then tried my damn-dest not to bring down the bus-sized dangler (much hooting and hollering from the audience gathered below). The ascribed rating is all over the place on this one, everything from M8+ (Hah!) up to M10 (?). Just go do the route!



Stepping out with Dicky Dick on a galactic Trip. RCC is seen negotiating the Somanmbulist roof. Photo: Jason Brooks.

In general things are holding up reasonably well at Vail. On the first day of spring I was able to still climb both **Secret Probation** and **8mm** although both were a tad harrowing due to melting and sublimation. Be aware though that a warm day can literally bring down the house, after being narrowly missed by a rock-fall below **Pitch Black** next to the **Rigid Designator**, I resolved to save this one for colder conditions and climb in more sheltered areas for what remains of the season. The Befly is in outstanding condition and the **Secret 'Cicle** area is also a good bet when temperatures surge, but time is a cruel mistress and the warmer days are going to see dissolution of the ice and frost that hold the

choss in place. Rocky Mountain National Park should be stellar this spring what with all the snow and cold we have had here. For anyone not utterly fixated on staring up at some girl's butt at Shelf Road this will be the place to go. I expect to have a ski up there soon and a look about, next issue maybe.

*Right: Is there any climbing on this route? RCC moon-walking to reach the ice on Somanmbulist. Photo Jason Brooks.*

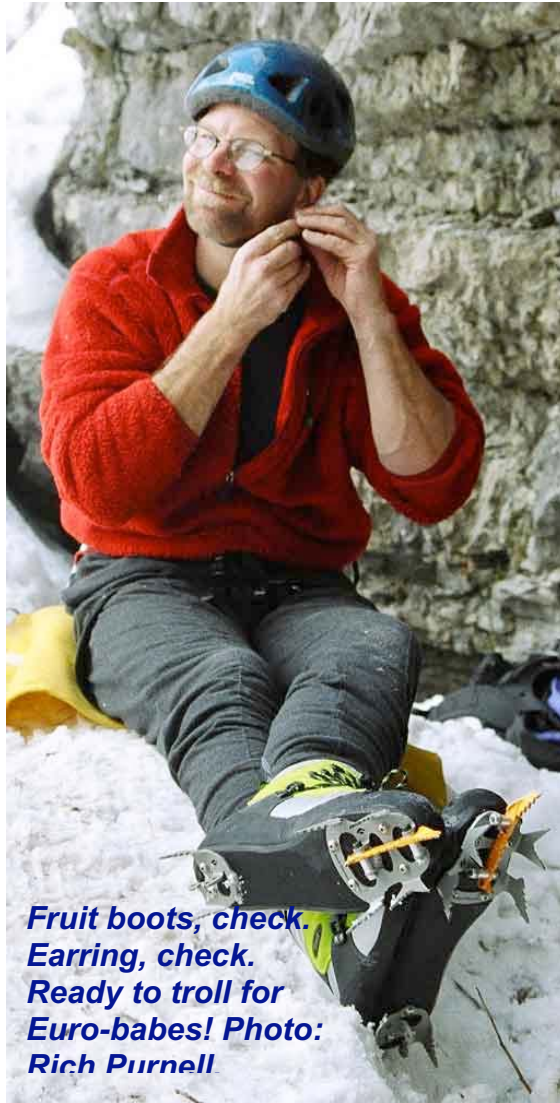


**Gear Review: Lowa Comp GTX/Black Diamond Raptor mixed bootie/bolt-on crampon. By Black Diamond Equipment and Lowa Boots. \$450US.**

At last the orphaned **Raptor** crampon has been teamed up with a respectable bootie. For the 2004-05 season the **Raptor** has been redesigned with a three-bolt heel-piece to fit the narrow **Comp GTX** bootie, otherwise the toe plate looks the same as the 2003-04 model, essentially a bolt-on version of the **Bionic** crampon in mono-point configuration. The **Raptor** sports a formidable (and potentially hazardous) orange spur you could suspend a portaledge from, there are two positions, horizontal and (sharply) inclined that the spur can be configured in. The front-point can also be adjusted to long and really long, this particular front-point has a pretty good droop, if the **Bionic** was your style this should appeal to you.

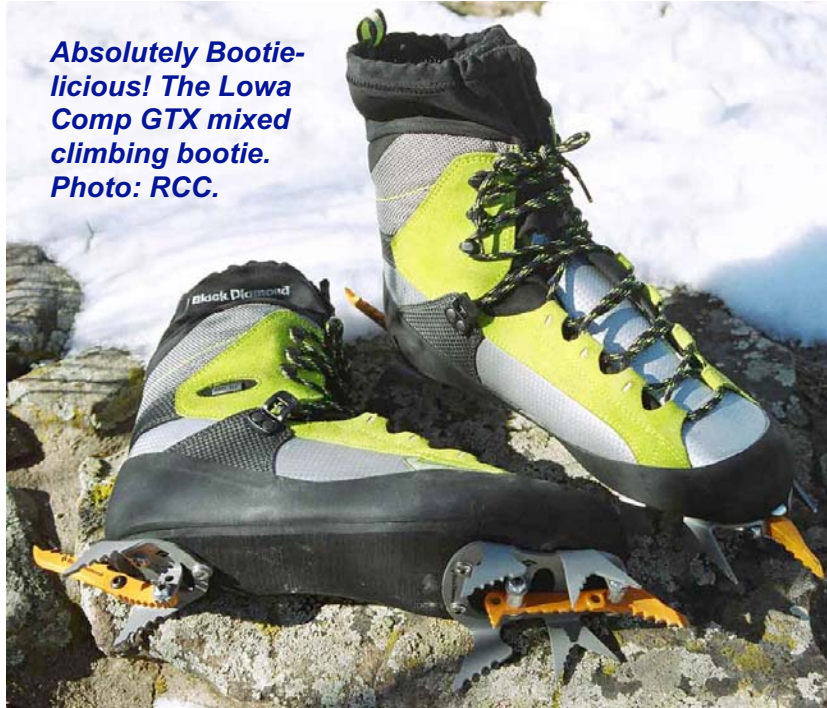
The **Lowa Comp GTX** bootie is essentially a very robust winter rock shoe with a full rand and smooth climbing-shoe rubber sole. The whole she-bang comes all drilled and fitted with T-nuts so off you go. The bootie is insulated, has an integral Gore-tex membrane and has a synthetic and leather-trimmed upper replete with a Schoeller fabric cuff that closes with Velcro to seal out snow and what-not. The booties are made in Italy so the

workmanship is excellent, no expense was apparently spared and every gewgaw and gee-whiz material has been incorporated into this bootie. Not only that but the considerable reputation of Ines Papert has been leveraged behind this product, on a recent excursion into [Wilderness Sports](#) in Silverthorne, Colorado I was greeted by a sizeable placard of the German mixed maven herself sporting these very same booties.



*Fruit boots, check.  
Earring, check.  
Ready to troll for  
Euro-babes! Photo:  
Rich Purnell*

So how do they climb? Pretty well, actually. The **Bionic** crampon is aggressively configured for ice, the secondary point set has the bivalent **Sabretooth** format which offers good bite and stability in waterfall ice. I am not as crazy about this feature for mixed climbing (read, rock climbing) as the



*Absolutely Bootie-licious! The Lowa Comp GTX mixed climbing bootie.  
Photo: RCC.*

forward aiming set of points tends to get in the way when used on rock. I also feel the pronounced droop of the mono-point is less than optimal for rock, the point is tricky to feed into holes or horizontal seams without lowering the heel considerably. The tertiary (rear-most) point set on the front plate is aggressively slanted towards

the heel for “raking”, or grabbing on to features under roofs or overhangs, this it does quite well. As mentioned earlier the **Raptor** has an immense spur, it is directly behind the heel and is very large and secure, once inserted in a hole or on an edge you would have to really kick free to get loose from this thing. Of course, you can just unbolt them for vertical mixed or ice routes. One other concern I had is the placement of the front plate with respect to the sole, I felt it to be too far forward, under the toes rather than the ball of the foot. (One could fill the existing holes and re-mount the plate further back, but that would undoubtedly void the warranty.)

How the bootie fit was another matter entirely. The **Comp GTX** comes with some very thick insoles that for all intents and purposes consumed much of the volume within the interior of the boot. Since you will need a “rock-shoe” fit to climb hard mixed routes with these things the insole was an early casualty of the fitting process. I wear a size 44 1/2 approach shoe and ended up in a size 42 1/2 **Comp GTX**, that involved fitting the boots with no insole and no socks, only then was the overall length correct. Still, the boot is quite narrow and in the toe-box area in particular there is very little overhead clearance. Why fit them so close you might ask? A valid question, but unless the spurs are only for show the heel must stay put in the boot when hanging inverted from the spur. In addition for precise front pointing on diminutive rock features you need a snug fit, think rock shoes here not mountaineering boots.

So, do you need a pair? Maybe you need them, or maybe you just want them. I would say if your tastes run toward waterfall routes and vertical mixed routes with a modest amount of rock you would be best to go with a pair of well-fit conventional climbing boots and some decent mono-point crampons. I did the test earlier this season and I could send everything up to and

including M7+ or so with a pair of **Sabretooth** crampons quite handily. While the **Lowa Comp** is fairly stiff they are nowhere near as stiff as a mountaineering boot, the emphasis being on sensitivity and performance on rock and delicate hanging ice features, they are simply not intended for kilometers of front pointing. While you may desire the cachet of a mixed bootie to set you apart from the herd, running laps on **Rigid Designator** in these things is just plain silly, if they are fit small enough to perform the role for which they are intended they will not be very comfortable to wear all day. It is also worth noting that

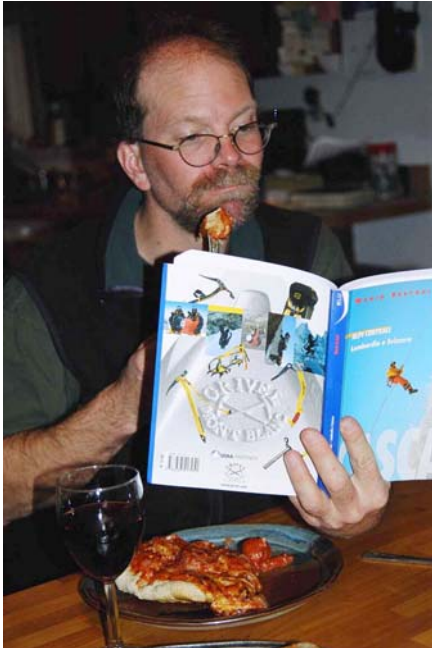


irrespective of the Primaloft insulation, these booties they are not overly warm. I only wear these “funny boots” to climb in, when done I lower off, sit down and change back into my regular boots for belaying, moving to another route, or hanging out (you carry these up to the climb!). A good rule of thumb for bootie-aceous living is to consider the types of routes you are doing. If the routes you frequent are predominantly rock with the odd ice feature thrown in then booties are probably your style.

**CASCATE, ALPI CENTRALI, Lombardi e Svizzera. By Mario Sertori, published by BLU EDIZIONI. 19 Euros.**

Ah! This is more like it! I don't even read Italian but just looking through this book got me absolutely chuffed to go over to Italy next winter and make a complete nuisance of myself. This volume deals with frozen waterfall and "goulotte" routes in the north-central Lombardy region of Italy (north and northeast of Milan) that abuts (and includes routes in) Switzerland. There are some 458 routes described (not to mention beautifully depicted) in this volume, the author Mario Sertori (who is about my age) has apparently spent much of his adult life climbing, photographing and cataloging the ice routes in this region, clearly this is an effort of love, and it shows. The photographs that include both scenic shots to illustrate the routes from afar and "psyche" shots that depict climbers sending the route in question are all in color, Mario must have many boot boxes filled with slides, a lifetime of

Kodachrome adventures.



*Right: RCC training hard for a winter trip to northern Italy. Photo: Susanne.*

The book is divided up into provinces and then into the alpine valleys within those provinces, an index in the front of the book lists the routes found within each valley and includes grading, altitude and route length. There is a master schematic map that outlines the topographic maps needed, each subsequent section then shows a line illustration of the corresponding topographic map with the routes marked on the map, even without Italian you could visit and use this book.

What really impressed me is that right in the front of the book there are 16 full-page color photos of climbers on some of these spectacular routes. Beautiful pictures of climbing ice included for no other reason than to demonstrate the aesthetics of the sport, I absolutely love this. Why else would anyone climb if not for the appeal to a sense of natural beauty? After wading through any number of American-born books with dreary black and white illustrations (and those cartoons! Blast and buggeration!) I was delighted to flip through this handsome book.

And what routes there are contained within, everything from austere alpine runnels, to cozy forested crags, you could motor around the lowlands or scare yourself up high, your choice entirely.

Now, mixed climbing is mentioned and a few “Bubu” routes show up but this is pretty much a waterfall ice guide. I am not really clear if there are simply not so many mixed routes (yet) or if the mixed crags were omitted (doubt it), but a couple of the caves (like the one where **Village** is on page 34) cry out for bolts and some toolin’ and schoolin’, as it were. Of course all the pertinent information like access, aspect, a route description, first ascensionists’ names, approach and so on is included for each route, the photos however are killer, each picture speaks a thousand words, albeit in Italian.

Yes, highlights. There is the magnificent **Supercouloir O Spada del Combolo**, 1000 meters of grade 5 and M5, the ice gods trill from afar that I should spend a cappuccino-imbued morning solo climbing this beauty. **La Pissa**, freestanding goddess of a route (grade 6, 150 meters) reminiscent of the French **La Liere**. Then there is the cave where **Damocle** resides, mixed potential beyond the wildest fantasies...

Get it, just to see what a book on ice climbing should look like, to dream, to hatch schemes. Yes, they do a guidebook for northwestern Italy and adjacent French mountain regions, hopefully the gods concur, send that one along next, yes?

### **Your Letters**

Issue number 7, the **Alcatraz** issue, drew some spirited letters, some of them quite long. Here are some excerpts.

*‘Hey Rob,*

*I have to say, being on very good terms with both Ben and Will. There is no "drilled holds" on the game or on any of the other lines established by Canadians in the Cineplex. I just had to put my two cents worth in. No, I have not climbed the Game...’*

*-Vince Anderson, Ouray, Colorado.*

*“...you say the game uses drilled and enhanced pockets. Bubu thought this too, but interestingly there were several new holds on the route after the ascents last spring, and the holds are all much deeper than they were. I don't think the game has any more than the usual aggressive hold cleaning common on mixed routes.”*

*-Will Gadd, Canmore, Alberta.*

*‘Yo Rob,*

*Good issue that one. Very interesting reading. Sounds like it may be sour grapes for your Canadian pal. Good effort to Rich. He is one driven mother fucker.”*

*-Ben Wilkerson, Isle of Skye, Scotland.*

There's more...

*Dear Rob, thanks for the reading matter. Very interesting and I don't now what to say. The route in Glenwood canyon looks very good and great fun. I guess if Will does it so quick, he must be allowed to say something, it's his right. If he wants to climb with out spurs fine, but personally I think spurs are good and just a crampon point in the right direction, it is a little bit sad that they make many routes easier. I don't wear spurs very much myself as they increase the chance of injury. The comments about the Game were spot on it was chipped to fit a big guy and was a bit off, the first ascent should be credited to the first guy to clip all the gear. Thanks for clearing that up, I always suspected more giggery pokery had gone on. It is terribly sad that all this shit goes on about mixed climbing, it confuses every body and gets away from what it is all about, that is, it's a great way to fuck yourself up with lactic acid in winter wonderland.*  
-Stevie Haston, Chamonix, France.

Rob responds:

*The presence of drilled pockets on The Game is apparently common knowledge.*

My review of the book **Alpine Climbing** drew this commentary from a flatlander.

*“Not that I think you should say this directly, but this review should be an embarrassment to an educated man. Were one of my students to turn in something like this, they would get a “D,” hell, maybe an “F”. ...notice how off-base his remark is that “In fact, there is virtually no illusion to actually ‘climbing’ in “Alpine Climbing”. ! -unless one has the extraordinarily narrow view that climbing is only about pulling up on rock and ice. The guy writes like a teenager,” “invocative” when he most plausibly meant “evocative”. For Christ’s sake, grow up!”*

Rob responds:

*Okay professor, I won't make allusions to your illusions and I won't point out your implausible malapropism. By the way, climbing is all about pulling on ice and rock, yes?*

### **Finally**

I would like to profusely thank Ingird Niehaus at **Lowa** for supplying the **Comp GTX** booties. I extend special thanks to **Blu Edizioni** for the guidebook. Please be aware that issues 1-7 of A FROZEN WORLD can still be down-loaded from **NEIce.com**, check the **Archives** for the early issues.

Please send your comments, suggestions (feel free to include the ranting and raving) to me, Rob Cordery-Cotter at:

[mixtdawg@juno.com](mailto:mixtdawg@juno.com)

Hey! There's still ice out there!

**Rob**

