

A FROZEN WORLD, VOLUME 1, 2004-05 SEASON

October 22, 2004

“Life in insurance was appalling.”- Dougal Haston, *In High Places*.

“This tool is designed for climbers who know how to use them, and recognize the situations appropriate for their use.”- Admonition from *grivel 2004/2005* catalog.

“The matchless courage of our troops was met by all manner of contrivances on the part of the Gauls; for they are a nation possessed of remarkable ingenuity, and extremely apt to copy and carry out anything suggested to them.” -Julius Caesar, *The Gallic War*.

Welcome to A FROZEN WORLD, the world’s premier mixed climbing newsletter that deals with all things leashless. The snow is flying here in the Colorado high country, the incessant drip, drip, drip is conspiring with the autumn air to create ice, yes, it is time, I think it is time.



Above: Rob engaged in a little "PR" (M7+), Vail, Colorado.

What's New at AFR

Well, the format for one. You will now notice the newsletter in Adobe format to create cleaner lines, you are certainly welcome to print it out for use at the breakfast table or where ever. This year I will also be accepting outside

submissions, letters, photos and so on, so if you write me to rant or don't be stunned to see your words in print. You were warned!

I will also be publishing a Vail mini-guide within the next month or two, with special emphasis on the mixed routes there. Again, feel free to print this out and pack it up, roll up smokes with it (dude!), whatever. This will be a work in progress so if you have information on your favorite route that you'd like to see included let me know.

Disclaimer

Mixed, ice, leashless, alpine, (you name it) climbing is insanely dangerous. People are maimed or die every year climbing ice and if you get out at all are not one of them you are exceedingly lucky. This newsletter is strictly for laughs, I am not an authority on the subject of climbing so taking anything written here seriously is sheer Tom Foolery. If you want to know how to climb hire a professional guide, or better yet go on Fear Factor where the risks are perceived, not real.



Above: Is this activity dangerous? RP dislodges a massive ice fragment (and himself) on "Good Golly!", Vail, Colorado.

Why Leashless?

Okay, what's with this leashless stuff? All the time I hear, "Why would I climb leashless when I have perfectly good tools with nifty leashes?"

Why indeed...

Because leashless climbing rocks, that's why. Last year I bought a pair of Black Diamond Fusion tools after climbing ice with leashes for over 25 years. I had done it all with leashes, waterfalls, alpine routes, mixed routes, all of the above solo. Even so, after I started going leashless I never went back, I haven't used a tool with a leash since. The freedom and excitement of leashless climbing is beyond comparison. Leashless climbing entails the tactile stimulus and sensuality of rock climbing and bouldering with all the inherent ferocity of winter, it is truly the heroin of climbing, and I'm addicted.

Okay?

Now let the games begin!

2003-04 Wrap-up

Last season saw leashless climbing really come into it's own, from the Cineplex to Vail, from the Aiguille des Pelerins to The North Twin, from El Capitan to the Painted Wall leashless climbing transfigured and adapted to a myriad of potential climbing situations. Vail (Colorado) saw a number of new routes established while many established routes were repeated by both visiting and local climbers, unfortunately the season was marred by near-tragedy at the end (see, **Disclaimer**, above).



Above: RP puts the chomp on "Nosfaratu" (M10?), Vail, Colorado.

Vail

Rich Purnell was active as per usual, new routes and variants were established that should keep would-be repeat mixed masters entertained for the immediate future. For starters, a new area was opened up to the east of the Belfry (the Belfry being the area that contains the ice routes *Pencil* and *Eraser*), the Abbey contains one route thus far *Nosfaratu*, an (unintentionally) total dry route that navigates an impressive roof past numerous bolts with spectacular and highly technical climbing. The ice never formed on this line, but Rich made the red-point anyway, probable M10+(?) country. Another infamous creation of his, *Lucky* got a makeover. This minimalist flake-fest formerly departed from the *Reptile* belay to navigate the big roof out to *The Fang*, you may now climb *Little Thang* and instead of lowering at the end of the ice at the rappel bolts you may now continue on up with *Lucky Integral*, arguably now the hardest route at Vail. In the Belfry, two new moderate routes went in, immediately right of *Misery* (M9), Pete Takeda added *PR* (M7+), a line well protected with bolts that gains the ice curtain left of *Eraser*. Further left still in the rock-fall scar is *Bats* (M6+) a line of thin hooks that lead to a pee-yellow curtain, this route also offers great climbing and is bolt protected. Both these latter two routes are excellent additions to the repertoire of moderate mixed routes in the area, so if you're stuck on *Secret Probation* and *Little Thang* these are fantastic lines within that grade range.

A new line has been opened up to the left of *Amphibian*, Eric Mahlgrem's *Serpent* follows a thin crack system past a series of roofs to join the second dagger on (the second pitch of) *Amphibian*. Numerous bolts plus some fixed pins are involved on this route, no word on whether it ever has been sent but it is one of the longer routes at Vail and the climbing is interesting at around M8+. Two new routes were added to the left of *Inferno* in the Secret 'Cicle area of east Vail, *Fruit Boot Riot* and (the other one) are basically variations of the same route, plenty of bolts and thin edges that gain the right hand wing of ice from *Secret 'Cicle*. These routes are M9+-M10(?), time will tell how well they withstand repeat attempts as the holds they utilize are pretty small and fragile. *Fever* is a refurbished three bolt rig on the left of *Secret 'Cicle*, a bit loose but not bad at around M8- or so.

On a more disconcerting note, there was a fairly serious accident in April involving an attempt on *Inferno* (M10R). Local guide David Roetzal was apparently working the route by way of a photo shoot for Patagonia when he dislodged a very large block at the start of the route, the block fell right on him pinning and crushing his ankle (Ouch!). Details are scarce, the rescue apparently took hours to affect and he is still rehabilitating from his injury and subsequent surgeries as we go to press.

In terms of analysis, despite a cold winter things had warmed up considerably by late March, whether this lack of frost accounted for the block coming down or if this is just an example of choss in motion is anybody's

guess. Ryan Nelson purportedly also took a near grounder on this route, if the route undergoes renovation at any point it may be time to add an extra bolt or two before the body count gets any higher

The “Just Say No To Spurs” Movement

This controversy proved to be a lively one last season. To keep it brief, a movement of sorts developed asserting that the use of the heel spur as an aid in mixed climbing had made mixed climbing too easy, or at least the “hardest” routes too accessible to all manner of riff-raff. In response, a select group of climbers opted to forego the use of the spur resorting instead to figure fours and similar acrobatics to achieve parity with the climb. I got some spirited letters on the matter, no less than Will Gadd, Ines Papert and Rich Purnell all weighed in on the matter not to mention rumors of other climbers disgruntled at my presentation of this issue.

In looking in the '04/'05 Black Diamond Ice/Alpinism catalog I see that Will, Simon Anthamattan, and Ben Firth are all depicted “sans eperons” on *Musahsi*, (*ditto*) and *The Game* respectively. Not sure how any of these blokes made out with these endeavors, of note is that Rich Purnell, Mauro “Bubu” Bolle, and Robert Jasper all (purportedly) repeated *The Game* (M13), ostensibly with spurs. Bubu (but, Yogi!) apparently had to fabricate an extension for his Grivel tool to achieve one of Firth’s more distant reaches on the route, Bubu also suggested that at least one of the key holds on the line is a drilled pocket, great stuff that. (*Riptide*, anyone?) It also looks like [Ines Papert](#) has climbed *Musahsi*, maybe the first unmanned ascent for that one, competent linguists may see for themselves at as her site is in German.

Current Conditions

There is snow up high in the Rocky Mountains now, summer is long gone and ice is forming in places like Rocky Mountain National Park. *Smear of Fear* on the lower east face of Long’s peak appears as if it is trying to form, a bit anemic yet, though. *Alexander’s Chimney* also on Long’s looks happening, bring rock gear for that one. *All Mixed Up* on Thatchtop is also trying hard to form (and pretty much has), as is the ice on Notchtop *North Face*. I had observed a good deal of water running and plenty of nascent ice when I was hiking around the park, this should be a banner year with good summer rainfalls and frequent snowfalls feeding the mix so far this autumn, *Necrophilia*, *The Squid*, they should all come in by late November. No word on Vail thus far, but several of the ski areas in Colorado are open already, shan’t be long now. I would look at mid to late November as a starting point for it being cold enough to render the caves at Vail safe enough to venture into.



Rob burning with "Fever", (M8-) Vail, Colorado.

New Gear!

Hot dog! New stuff! I looked in the new [Grivel North America](#) catalog and spoke with one of their sales representatives recently, Grivel has come out with no less than three, that's correct three, new leashless tools for this season plus a host of other groovy items and accessories. Their top o' the line leashless wiener is the *Racing (Wing)* a new design with lines reminiscent of the Charlet Moser *Ergo Quark* but with a roomier two hand-position grip and a stop where the handle meets the grip. They also have an "adventure" leashless tool called the *Taa-k-oon* (no clue what his name denotes), it utilizes their older design trigger and end horn configuration with a provocative curve to the handle, it looks very intriguing. Both these tools have hot-forged steel heads and may employ either the *Cascade* or *Mixte* blades for waterfall or mixed applications as the names suggest. The *Cascade* looks a bit light for heavy-duty dry-tooling and while the *Mixte* is very robust, the profile on the latter seems a bit high for coaxing into small features at first blush. As usual though, Grivel manufactures an exceedingly tough and performance-oriented product (in the shadow of Monte Bianco, no less), so I would assume these tools will send anything you can and then some. The big stir is with the [Monster](#), a weird entry in the new (equally weird) arena of "total dry" climbing (i.e., ice is optional to non-existent). Rather than having a tubular aluminum handle as most tools do, *Monster* has a (laser cut?) spring-steel (flat) handle, the grip is more or less like that of the *Racing* tool. The head is a one-piece "pick" that bolts right on to the handle with three Allen bolts,

including the grip there are at least four distinct hand position options designed into the handle. To go completely over the top in a characteristically Italian manner the tool comes in no less than six distinct (and that's putting it mildly) graphics imprinted on the handle that include American Flag, Leopard Spots, Paisley and Snakeskin. At approximately 99 euros each (\$120) you can own several pairs of tools to color coordinate with your most happening bra and panty sets, like, totally! Seriously though, these are very interesting tools and are intended to make the transition to leashless less economically painful, two for the price of one as it were. No hammer or adze here, it's a pick on a stick, that's it. (Yes, I too am dying to try a set, the tools I mean).



Above: Check out those groovy colors!

Other goodies in the Grivel catalog are the *Racing* crampon, a bolt-on crampon with an aggressive and detachable spur that can be configured with mono or dual front-points. This is the crampon that comes with the *LaSportiva Mega Ice* bootie, but if you are just dying to spend hours and hours of your time trying to bolt these puppies on to some ice skates or whatever here's your chance to buy just the points. Grivel also has two new ice screws, the modest *Helix* and the innovative *Americana* that features a lever arm that can be opened to send the screw home in a hurry. Grivel also now sells two sizes of triggers that can be affixed to either their tools or anybody else's for leashless use, there is also *The Horn* similar to the BD

Viper Fang to convert both their *Alp* and *Light Wing* tools to leashless applications, purportedly this accessory will retro-fit older Grivel designs to give them a new (leashless) lease on life.

Trango has come up with (yet another) new leashless tool for this season, it is called *Mantis* and features a polyurethane grip (no spike) to greatly lighten the tool. Done up in a buggy looking green color (what else?) the handle appears to be last year's *Headless Hook* with the new handle bolted on (the handle/grip system is modular on the Trango tool line). As with the other new tools the proof will be in the proverbial pudding but clearly leashless tool evolution is still underway. I may have already discussed this one last season, but the *Squid*, a bizarre Lexan contraption designed to affix to a paint pole is indispensable for clipping and un-clipping draws from bolts, not to mention lassoing the rope into draws, plus less elegant techniques like handing dropped tools back up to clumsy leaders. At \$30 plus the pole it's a pretty good investment and yes it does actually work in the cold.

Book Review, “Washington Ice, A Climbing Guide”, by Jason D. Martin and Alex Krawarik, [The Mountaineers Books](#), \$21.95.

I received this guide last year with a copy of Will Gadd's *Ice and Mixed Climbing*¹, it languished on the shelf all summer, but no more! If you live in or near Washington State and you ice climb, this would be a very useful book to possess. When I lived and climbed in the Seattle area in the 1980s, no such book existed so I had to pretty much create the sport of ice climbing in Washington, and such an adventure it was...

Writing an ice-climbing guide for a state like Washington is a very ambitious project indeed given the length and breadth of the Cascade Range alone, not to mention the elusive ice of eastern Washington. The authors of this volume clearly did a good deal of research plus clearly they hoofed it around Washington quite a bit. There are some notable omissions within this guide, the East Face of the Tooth and New York Gulley on Mt. Snoqualmie are two of the most accessible and fine mixed routes in the state, both located around Snoqualmie Pass and very close to Seattle. The North Face of Colonial Peak has several big ice routes on it including the Twilight-Bebie, no mention of it here. Then there are small discrepancies, the photo caption on page 97 reads, "...climbing The Pencil". The guy depicted is slogging to the base of the thing. There is also tasteless profanity included within the route name on page 59, a route on Pyramid Peak north face, I won't get into it except to say

¹ I already reviewed the tome by Will last season. Suffice to say it is the only book on the subject of ice and mixed that I know of that is really worth purchasing. If you are starting out or wanting to move up to leading and more serious climbing you should own and study this book, it is quite comprehensive and most informative.

that the authors not to mention the editor should have had better sense than to print this drivel, it detracts from an otherwise decent book. Lastly, I climbed the route *Crystal Blue* on page 78 in 1989 so the first ascent attributed in 1991 just isn't so.

Overall though, this guide is a good effort. (Guys, be sure and get in touch if you are planning a second addition, much to tell.)

Finally

A FROZEN WORLD is a publication of Mixtdawg Media, which is solely (sorely) responsible for its content. (This is all in fun so might I suggest you get a grip before you fire off some testy e-mail at me.)

Should you have something interesting to share, photos, reports, corrections, comments by all means send them along. If you have a book, DVD, or some gear item you want reviewed here please contact me so I can tell you where to send it, new stuff interests me greatly and it would have to be pretty awful before I panned it.

You may contact me, Rob Cordery-Cotter at:

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Climb hard! (And be safe!)

Rob

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