



Rock And Crag Knowledge

Editorial

Welcome to the inaugural edition of the **RACK** newsletter. I would like to take this opportunity to outline the basic aim of the newsletter - promoting safe and responsible rock climbing practices. To this end the name of the newsletter reflects this with RACK standing for **Rock And Crag Knowledge**. We aim to also embrace the Yerba mate era of climbing in Central Australia, and that of the Guarani Indian's of South America yerba mate drink ritual of friendship and hospitality, with friends and acquaintances passing time telling stories and talking about the days events, for which it is hoped that this newsletter will support. This newsletter has no ownership by any one individual and therefore belongs to the whole climbing community. I would like to encourage all climbers and interested parties to contribute articles, ideas, information, friendship and support.

Several key recurring features planned for the newsletter are:

Editor's Article - forum to discuss interesting issues or events that have taken place between newsletters or are coming up, such as the publishing of the Central Australian Rock Climbing Guide by Krish Seewraj (see **RACK 2**)

Krish's Corner - regular feature on the history and background of climbs in the area

Lone Dingo Gear - highlights items of gear for your rack or pack. Useful technical information will enable climbers whether novice or experienced to assess its worth for their rack.

Rock TAPAS - a small taster from climbers about their Thoughts, Attitudes, Perspectives, Adventures and Stances about climbing,

Climbing Knowledge - aims to increase knowledge on safety and raising awareness of situations that could possibly occur. This does not take away the responsibility from the individual for their own safety or that of their climbing partners

Letters/Info - allows debate on any subject relating to the activity of rock climbing, from new climbs, access issues, travel to distant crag information, contact details, questions, meetings and other relevant information related to climbing.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Steve W, Krish, Steve T as well as Simon, Mariann and the staff from Lone Dingo for their support putting this newsletter together, and hopefully this will continue with the added support from the rest of the climbing community that can only improve this newsletter. (Warwick)

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Warning: Climbing and the activities in this newsletter can carry a significant risk of personal injury and/or death. These activities are inherently dangerous. The producers and contributors of this newsletter do not recommend that anyone participate in these activities without the full knowledge of the risks involved, have sought expert qualified instruction and are willing to personally assume all responsibility associated with those risks.

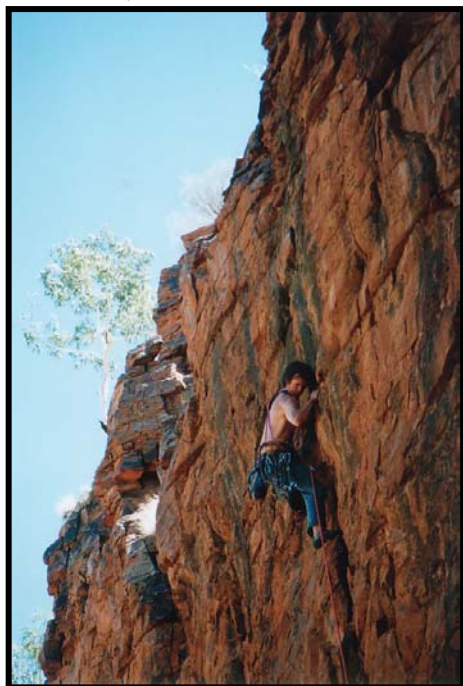
Krish's Corner

Ormiston Bluff has the largest concentration of high quality midrange routes in Central Australia. It is also fortunate to be on land managed by the Rangers of Ormiston Gorge who, despite having had no NT Parks and Wildlife policy on climbing to guide them, have allowed climbers to enjoy the delights of the many great lines.

The first recorded ascent on Ormiston Bluff was by Simon Mentz and Roark Muhlen-Schulte, when in June 1992 they put up The Vibraphone (17). Strangely there are no records of new routing here until the winter of 1995, when the place received several onslaughts of visits from the Yerba's.

Cont over....

Krish's Corner continued...



However, it is rumoured that Roark Muhlen-Schulte was responsible for many of the bolts and decent chains that exist here today. So it is likely that he did a lot more climbing there prior to the Yerba's.

The picture shows Dr Dave Shepherd concentrating on the excellent Tranquillity (17). A classic natural line, and one not to be missed. According to available records Rhyl Shaw top roped the line in April 1995 during a visit by the Yerba's, giving it the grade of 15 but not naming it. The line remained a top rope problem for just over three years until Mark Rewi and Ali Trebileo came visited the crag. Mark led the climb in May 1998 and aptly named it

Tranquillity (17). The line is steep, sustained and puts you in some very exposed positions. The rock quality is good and yields the sort of holds and protection you'd expect at the grade, when you need them most. As with most climbs in the centre care should be taken with the top out, but if you have managed the difficulties below this should not provide you with any problems. (Krish)

Rock Tapas

People get started in climbing for all sorts of reasons. It might be the challenges that excite them, the heights that exhilarate, or the beauty of the surrounds that makes them wonder why they haven't left the city more often.

My story contains no such lofty ideals. I got into climbing because I got onto the wrong bus. I thought I was heading to a river somewhere in the high country to go kayaking. I became suspicious when all the talk in the bus was about ropes and harnesses, heights and fear. This concerned me somewhat for I thought we were all going for leisurely paddle, where the worst-case scenario involved getting a little wet and maybe a blister or two. The heads doing the talking were also people who weren't my friends. I knew them as members of my form year, but they weren't my best mates, the ones I was looking forward to spending the week with. Before I could finish thinking, "something could be seriously wrong here..." Mr Conway's voice interrupted my thoughts - "Thornton, what are YOU doing on this bus?"

Mr Conway was an ex-army guy who was in charge of outdoor activities at school. He organised the camps and took great pride in all of them going off without a hitch, so seeing me on his bus, the wrong bus, was not the best start to his day.

"You're supposed to be going kayaking boy, I filled out the form myself."

I knew it was a dumb question but couldn't help asking, "we're not going kayaking?"

He gave me that look of exasperation you get from people when the only words they have to offer you are not very nice ones. Cont over....



Lone Dingo Gear

The Petzl Reverso is one of the latest in belay device designs. It is a belay/abseil device that offers an auto-locking mechanism when belaying the second or two seconds simultaneously, however when belaying the leader (or abseiling) the device works just like a normal ATC style device.

The device can be successfully used to belay the leader with half ropes ($8 \leq \phi \leq 9\text{mm}$) and single ropes ($10 \leq \phi \leq 11\text{mm}$). A second can be belayed in auto-locking mode using both single and half ropes ($8 \leq \phi \leq 10.5\text{mm}$), but beware of the implications of using the device like this! In this mode, the device is locked when under tension - that is if your second is injured and needs to be lowered mid-climb, you can't! (Well not easily anyway). Note: auto-lock also requires a second krab to function.

As an abseil device the Reverso can be used in three different frictional arrangements, to accommodate users of different weights (this can be useful in rescue/lowering situations). Descents using the device are quite smooth.

The device weighs only 81grams and retails for \$44.00. A similar device, the Reversino, deals with smaller double ropes. (Dean)



www.petzl.com

Rock Tapas Cont

His big bushy moustache went a funny shape as he pursed his lips to contain the expletives a young schoolboy's ears should not hear, his beady eyes narrowed and sweat started developing on his prematurely balding head. In the end all words escaped him, he looked to the roof of the bus for a few seconds then turned around and waddled back to his seat at the front of the bus.

I made a mental note to stay out of his way for the rest of the week.

And what a week it was! We went to Mt Arapiles, which I soon discovered was a very special place. Years went by, I climbed and climbed and met wonderful people and saw amazing places.

Then one day I found myself at Hong Kong harbour. It was just before the handover back to the Chinese so it was an exciting time to be there. I caught a very flash high-speed catamaran with my good friend and climbing partner Kieran. We were both a bit worried that Kieran's bright red Mohawk would cause us some grief with the border police in China, which is where we'd be when we got off the boat. I told him that if he weren't allowed into the country I would send him a postcard, to which he replied, "thanks mate."

Now, I only knew two words in Mandarin at this stage. One was "Nei How" meaning hello. The other was "Guangzhou," which was the name of the city we needed to get to on the bus. So, naturally, when I got to the ticket office I said, "Nei How, Guangzhou." The efficient little character nodded his head in understanding, then raised one finger and an eyebrow to enquire about the number of tickets I'd need. Kieran had disappeared behind closed doors but I decided to be positive, I raised two fingers then waited with our luggage at the bus to which I was directed. Kieran eventually appeared, looking a bit paler than before, and we were on our way.

Ten hours later we found ourselves in a bustling, smoggy metropolis. We got the guidebook out and stopped a passer-by. "Guangzhou?" we asked.

"No," was the reply. Maybe they didn't understand us, we asked someone else.

"Guangzhou?"

"No." Mmmm.

Guangzhou?"

"No."

"We're not in Guangzhou, you know," said Kieran.

"Yeah, I've figured that much out, and unless we're in 'Hello' city I've got no idea where we are."

"What?"

"Well I only know two Chinese words, hello and Guangzhou. So if we're anywhere else it's not my fault."

He gave me that same look Mr Conway had given me a decade before, but in the end we did a bit of research, found some local crags and stayed on for nearly a week. We met a few locals and had a great time and all thoughts of Guangzhou were forgotten. What was lost in translation was rediscovered in experience.

The point of these two small stories is that people climb for all sorts of different reasons. Fitness, friendship, ambition, ego. They're all fair reasons, and each person's reasons are unique to them and as such valid. I often wonder what reasons people have for sitting on the couch all weekend doing nothing, but our society seems to think this is normal behaviour and as such they don't get called crazy, extreme, having a death wish, or the myriad of other such ridiculous terms often directed at climbers.

After seventeen years and many wonderful experiences later, I like to think I climb because one day when I was young and naïve and didn't know any better I hopped on the wrong bus and ended up at a place that taught me more about life, on and off the cliffs, than I could have ever imagined. I guess it's just about making the most of where you end up, regardless of how you got there.

As far as bagging summits or ticking grades goes, I'll leave that to others. Some of my most enjoyable climbs have been those on which I've turned around. (Steve T)

Climbing Knowledge

Harnesses - Strap Yourself In

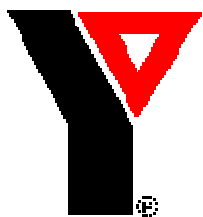
Probably the first place we should start talking about safety is with harnesses. Why's that? Because no matter how expensive your rope is, how shiny your high tech protection is, or how good your new shoes look, they all mean nothing if you don't have your harness on right. Sounds pretty simple doesn't it? It is, but so many accidents happen every year because people forget to do this simple task properly.

A few points that should keep you out of bother are first and foremost, that if you're not sure or you just don't know - ASK! They are not meant to be confusing, but sometimes even experienced people look at their harness and wonder how they got so out of shape.

Once you know how to put it on, get into the habit of checking it, then double-checking, and then triple checking it. In a nutshell, check it as often as you can, so you can tell at a glance if you have actually put it on right. TODAY, that is, not entertaining memories about how it was yesterday.

So, check your buckles are doubled back. You might have one of the older types where you have to buckle into the leg loops as well as the waist belt. If you've got one of those modern harnesses, remember the Velcro on the waist belt is just to keep it snug while you strap into the buckle. More than one person over the years has attached the Velcro, got distracted then just assumed because it feels right it must be on right, only to find out too late they didn't buckle in. So LOOK, LOOK, and LOOK again.

Some things change from the gym to the cliff, but putting on your harness is always the same. It's a simple task that can lead to complacency, so get into good habits early on, and you'll be snug as a bug on a jug. (Steve T)



YMCA of Central Australia

P.O. Box 2458 Alice Springs NT 0871

Sadden Rd.

(08) 89525666

Fax (08) 89527082

YMCA Rockwall

Open wall nights:

Mondays 6-8pm

Wednesdays 6-8pm

*Instructors present during these times. Belay certification available.

Flyers with more information available at the YMCA. Rockwall membership passes coming soon!

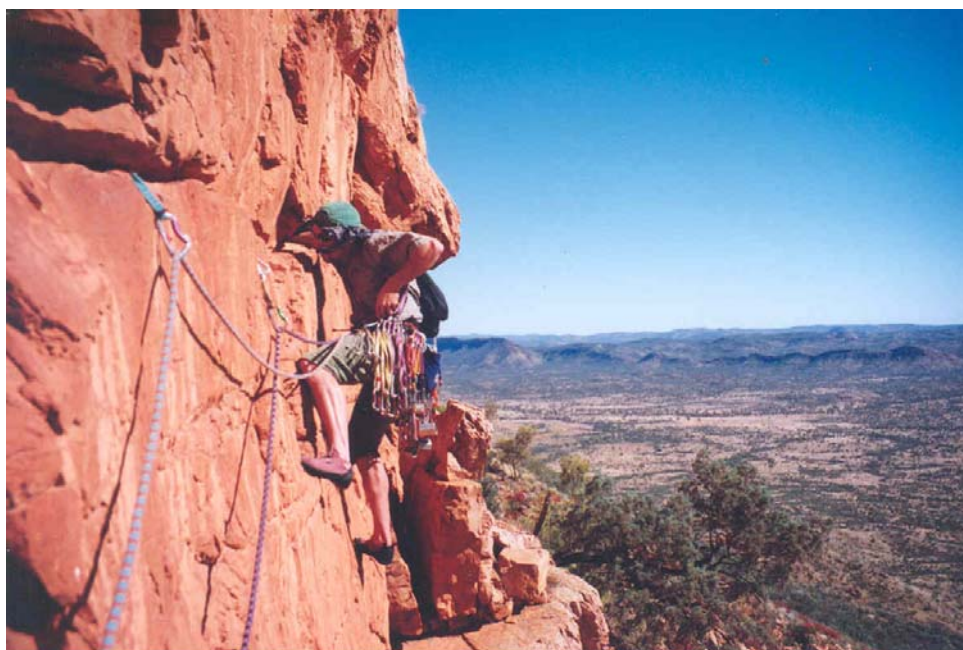
Rock Ratz Kid's Climbing Club

For kids ages 4-12, with parent involvement!

Program is 10 weeks of instructed sessions on knot tying, belaying, climbing techniques and safety procedures. Kids climb as parents belay and coach their child to the top!

Program will start in Sept/Oct. Brochures with information and registration can be picked up any time at the YMCA.

Call or email for more details. yprogram@bigpond.net.au



Letters/Info

Any correspondence articles for this newsletter, please leave at Lone Dingo - Todd Mall.

Sun 29th May - 4pm.
Social gathering at Charles Creek. Access by turning right onto old North Stuart Highway at the 'Welcome to Alice Springs' sign. Bring your climbing shoes.