

# Tips on Cracks

## Tips On Yosemite Off-Width Cracks

(From Post To Supertopo Web Site In Response to Questions, 2006)

### General

- technique: involves separate movement of lower and upper body: if right arm straight in, right leg is in and cocked up, foot and leg torqued; left arm is bent and holding crack edge near head; move by shifting hips out and pumping up off left foot heel-toe at outer edge of crack; hold self in with arms but don't try to drag body up; arms stabilize, legs do push up, then arms move up to hold in for next pump; motion is sideways coma, straighten, comma, straighten; don't pump unless have good pump foot as will waste energy and cause, uh, panic.

- rest: if heel toe is good, left edge sharp, and not overhanging, one can rest between pumps (e.g. Crack of Despair); other rest can come from chicken wing arm in crack, if crack and upper arm length match.

- flares: where bombay or flare won't allow heel toe pump, try feet in a T position for double leg pump (e.g. short wide 5.9 section on Traveler's Buttress, Lover's Leap).

- helpful to have sling for hardware, hanging from outside side, versus hanging stuff on harness or swami which blocks hip area; other posts make same point too.

- protection: long ago, used bongs, t-bars and tubes; t-bars were tempting choice since have slim profile compared to tubes; work OK (e.g. Crack of Fear, Colorado) except for flare and bombay places; tubes also OK, but need to fiddle to get just right size and avoid pivoting; all why Bigbros and big Friends are preferred (but didn't have them long ago).

- rack: try to get rack recommendation from trusted, experienced friend so don't take too much or little as either is vexing.

- reversing: when practicing, try down climbing a little to know it is possible and how to do it; helps reduce fear to know (or fool yourself) you can go back to a "secure" point.

- body size: important are distance from shoulder to elbow, knee width and hand size for transitions into hand cracks; in time, will learn favorite and hated widths and be able to "read" cracks for rest points (see "chicken wing" above).

- pacing: very important not to rush, take time, rest, think about body position, as other posts suggest; beauty of off-widths is how impossible and possible they are all in a matter of moments; very satisfying to make it; very disconcerting to retreat, a most quirky love.

- crack machine: consider building crack machine since hard to practice on real thing; once put up wooden plank job on side of three story house; planks supported by 2 X 6's (probably overkill) on edge to give stiffness; third story porch and railing allowed top to be moved easily along railing so whole thing could be vertical, less or overhanging and any width; climbed between planks (didn't have plywood then) and stucco house wall (reminds me of English "grit").

### Notes From Old Diary

- Cream: hard part is early while still fresh; secure higher with good knee fit; tube chocks up to 6 inches were cumbersome, but pretty secure; nice line.

- Twilight Zone: t-bars and tubes did not work well; felt mostly 3rd class; quite insecure and strenuous all the way until, strangely, crux where pinches down and is more technical (getting around pro) than scary; key lore is Pratt hung at crux, yelled to T.M. Herbert to run to car to get bong, hauled it up, finished climb; some say big friends make this much easier on the mind, but talk to trusted ones before go as climb has ugly, knifing flakes at bottom.

- Left Side of Slack: tubes and bars did not work too well, but climb felt much more safe than TZ with no fall prospect onto piercing flakes; crux creeps up, wearing you out if don't go easy; overall, good, stiff starter off-width given easy access too.

- Despair: quite secure off width; sharp edge to grab, good heel toe with right side in, stronger side for most; good bolt protected it in old days; key lore - here Frank Sacherer nearly pulled Tom Gerughty off because young, inexperienced Tom stepped on a bolt to rest; some old mentors were pretty strict about free being free.

- Edge of Night: very hard technically due to nasty flare; easy to flail and try to overpower; again, bongs and bars not good; modern big friends probably much better.
- Hourglass: right side has pretty short crux and not too hard, but hard to protect with bars and tubes (left side crux is very hard undercling, not off width); remote, peaceful feel to Ribbon Falls area and views to soaring west wall of El Cap.

Hope this helps.