

A Classic Weekend

(classic = long, sometimes unprotected, often with loose rock, featuring a death march approach, yet strangely enjoyable.....)

This was a trip back in time; back to the days when men were men, bold was in and bolts were not. 9 naive young men left Perth late on Friday 17 October 1997. This is a story of what happened to them.

Marty was sandbagged into leading *Clockwork Orange* (27m, 8), a fine line on Talyuberlup Peak. Belatedly came his realisation that this climb was graded 26 years ago, a long time before grade 16s were invented ! Mad Dog Marty came to screeching halt at the very top of this intimidating corner, frozen in terror induced by the massive overhang above him. I had to come up and lead the remaining 1 meter to the top. **Strength:** places bomber gear, it took me 20 minutes and a lot of skin to get the #8 nut out (he did the same to me on *Nailbite*, I have the scars to prove it !!) **Weakness:** afraid of big overhangs and dislikes ropes. **Quote:** "I love skydiving but ropes give me the shits. They swing me around too much if I fall." Hmmm.

Ross sandbagged himself into leading *Riddy Was Here* (90m, 15) on Marmabup Rock, the Porongurups, possibly the first lead of this route in the last 10 years. The first human to complete the route was Dave James. (Mike Smith is not human and so doesn't count.) Now, I may be wrong about the last 10 years, but be assured that the moss was prosperous, dirt undisturbed and the lilies I was stepping on were very healthy looking.....NOBODY has climbed there in years !

At the top of the second pitch I realised that my last piece of gear was 10 meters below, the next pro was 6 meters above (a big ledge with a bush), and getting there involved getting very familiar with a very mossy chimney. (There was a piton crack right next to me, definite belay material, unfortunately pitons went out of favour 10 years ago and so I did not have one.)

The full story of my inglorious defeat shall go unrevealed here (ask Marty or Shane). Let's just say that, after 1 hour of pondering my impending grim death, I aborted, downclimbed, rapped off the first belay and recovered all abandoned gear via a 100 meter abseil off the top. **Strength:** slow, delayed response to fear. **Weakness:** few functioning brain cells, leading to poor route selection. **Quote:** while downclimbing: "Shane, keep it tight, I think I'm gonna fly !!"

Shane came to know the delights of multipitch climbing when he was stuck while belaying me on *Riddy Was Here*. Frozen by the same wind that was refrigerating me 20 meters higher up, Shane discovered that multi-pitch was not his thing just yet. **Strength:** dependable fella, with outwardly calm appearance **Weakness:** calm appearances conceal a well hidden internal terror. Also owns a car which is said to be the main reason behind Perth's smog problem. **Quote:** "The cops can't read my licence plate when I take off the lights".

Jon went to Bluff Knoll, abseiled from the Prick'll Traverse down The Nose pitch of *Easter Gully* (17, 193m), led the pitch, then walked off, declaring the other 7 pitches to be a waste of time.

On Sunday he decided to do some serious climbing and headed for the short routes on Castle Rock in the Porongurups. Finding no meaning in *Meaningless* (22), he on-sighted *Vous* (23) and took a whole two hangs while topropping *Karma* (24). All this to the clicking cameras and rolling video tapes of wide-eyed tourists. All this, while I was being killed on Marmabup Rock. Bastard !! **Strength:** yes, too much. **Weakness:** thick black curly hair restricts vision, unable to see the top of most climbs from further than 2 meters away.

Tom complained that the air was moving past him too fast while climbing and belaying on *Jetstream* (17, 60m). **Strength:** young, pure, still immortal. **Weakness:** too many stickers make his helmet heavy, sometimes causing sloppy technique, which 3 months ago resulted in breaking one of his fingers. **Quote:** "It's a piece of piss." (about any route)

Gordon discovered that walking up 400 vertical meters up Talyuberlup was a small price to pay for leading the second pitch of *Nailbite* (15, 50m). He flew up it like the Flying Scot that he is. By the way, this route was featured in Joe Friend's 1983 book *Classic Climbs of Australia*. **Strength:** Had the good sense to walk away from *Riddy Was Here* after he saw it and leave it to me. An adventurous fella, he and Dave contributed a couple of new routes on The Devil's Slide (descriptions to be published later). **Weakness:** says that he's been climbing for 15 years and gets worse every year, (ie. bullshits a bit). **Quote:** "Joyce will lead this pitch." (when faced with a scary lead; there is never anybody around called Joyce.)

Rudi learned that trusting Jon is not always a good thing, after Jon pointed him in the wrong direction on *Life Wasn't Meant To Be Easy* (15), on Bluff Knoll. Faced with a manky roof, this Arnold Schwarzenegger countryman (visiting us from Austria), wisely retreated. **Strength:** an incredibly smooth climbing style; moves as if climbing on broken glass. **Weakness:** wears lycra. **Quote:** "No Prrrroblem." Now gone back to the Alps. "Hasta la vista, baby !!"

Derek, after walking in for 45 minutes up Talyuberlup, found himself a 4 meter boulder at the trackside, clambered onto it and then discovered that he can't get down. (This further proves the known fact that things are higher from above.)

David, after his first club trip, is as yet an unknown quantity. Keeps his mouth shut and climbs like a fiend. A nice bloke.

Wrap Up: if you intend to climb any Stirlings/Porongurups classics, you will need a full rack and:

- (1) helmets
- (2) approx. 8 long slings' quickdraws are often far too short and can create heinous rope drag,
- (3) Many Friends for the parallel-sided cracks/grooves of the Porongurups. Hexes come very useful in the Stirlings, and often are a better choice there than Friends, and
- (4) long sturdy pants for the approach !