

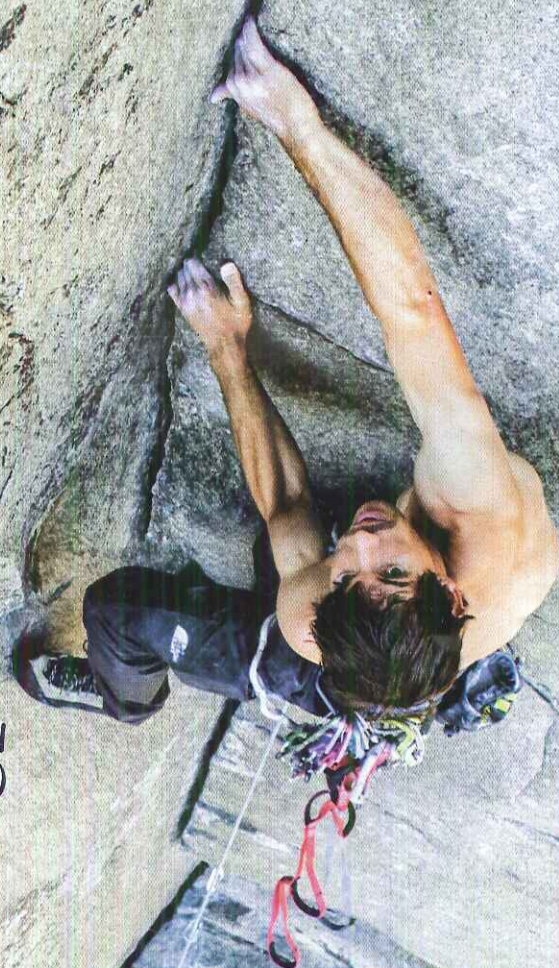
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Honnold & Allfrey

7 EL CAP ROUTES IN SEVEN DAYS



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HONNOLD AND ALLFREY'S EL CAP

SEVEN ROUTES IN SEVEN DAYS

They made history when they did it in June, and it may never be done again

By Kristin Conard

Driving past El Cap meadow in June, we saw a group of ripped, shirtless guys walking towards the river. I recognized one of them. I punched my friend in the arm. "It's him," I whispered, "It's Honnold."

We had happened upon Alex Honnold and Dave Allfrey in the wild after they'd finished their epic exploit of climbing seven full routes on El Capitan in seven consecutive days. And there they were. Gods among men just strolling through the meadow.

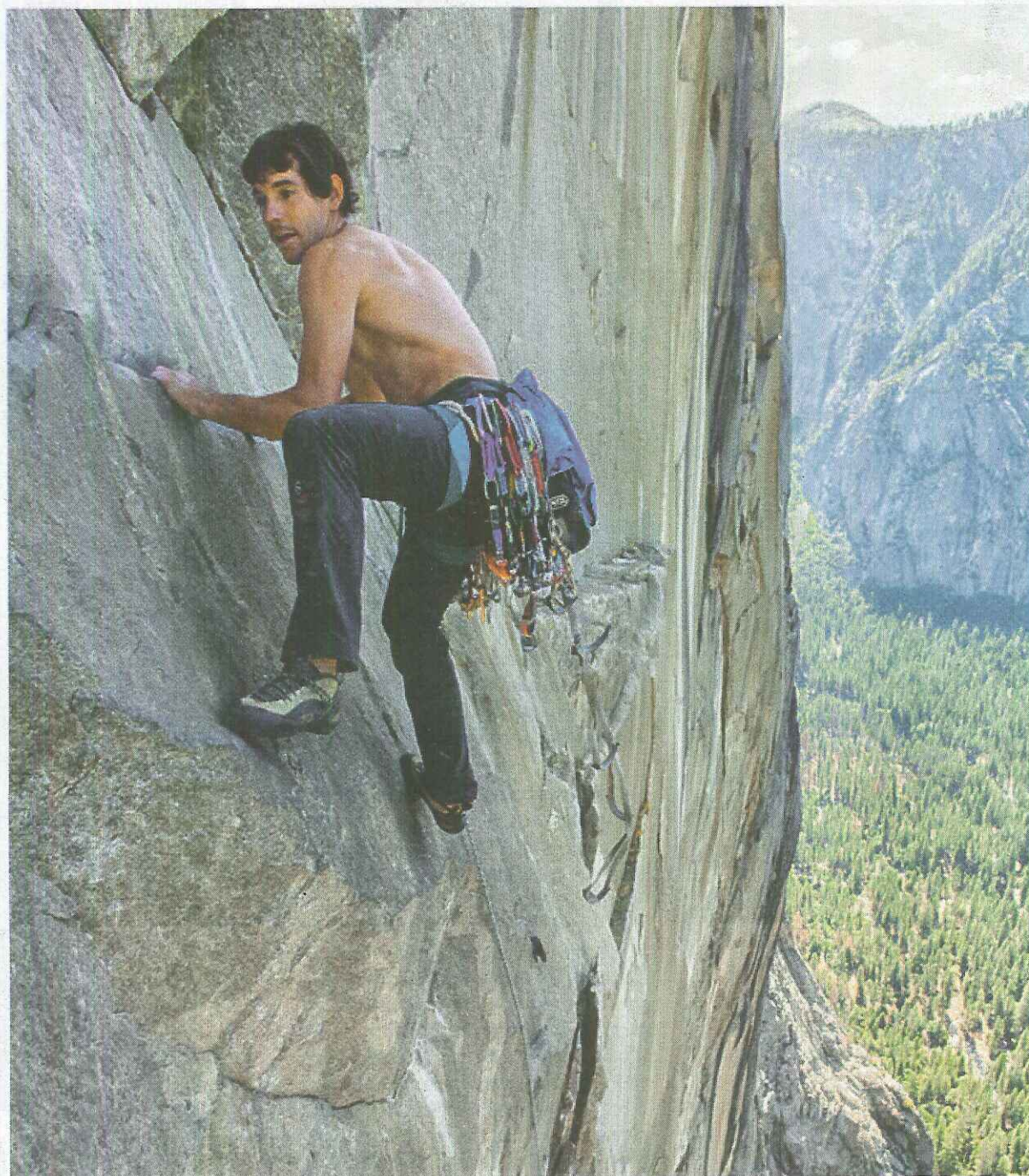
While I didn't chase them down (must respect boundaries), I did get them each on the phone to talk about their epic adventure and the shape of Yosemite climbing to come.

Climbers Ammon McNeely and Ivo Ninov first dreamed up the 7 in 7, and it was Allfrey's idea to make the dream real. "It was a lunatic idea I heard about before I'd ever even climbed El Cap," explained Allfrey, "Hearing some of the best big wall climbers in the world talk about this idea as this thing that would be so beyond. It sat in my brain for a lot of years."

Allfrey later brought it to Honnold, "When he first told me," Honnold said, "I thought it'd be really easy. [Note: there are few other people on the planet who would have that reaction.] I've climbed El Cap three times in a day before. As I thought about it more, I thought it'd be kind of tough."

Most find it takes three to five days to climb one El Cap route. To do it in one day is done by an even more elite crowd. But these guys did it seven times in seven days and set four speed records along the way. A linkup so unheard of in terms of endurance and competence it

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places them in Yosemite climbing hero status. But to hear them talk about it, it was an adventure, sure, but not something they saw as making a mark on history.

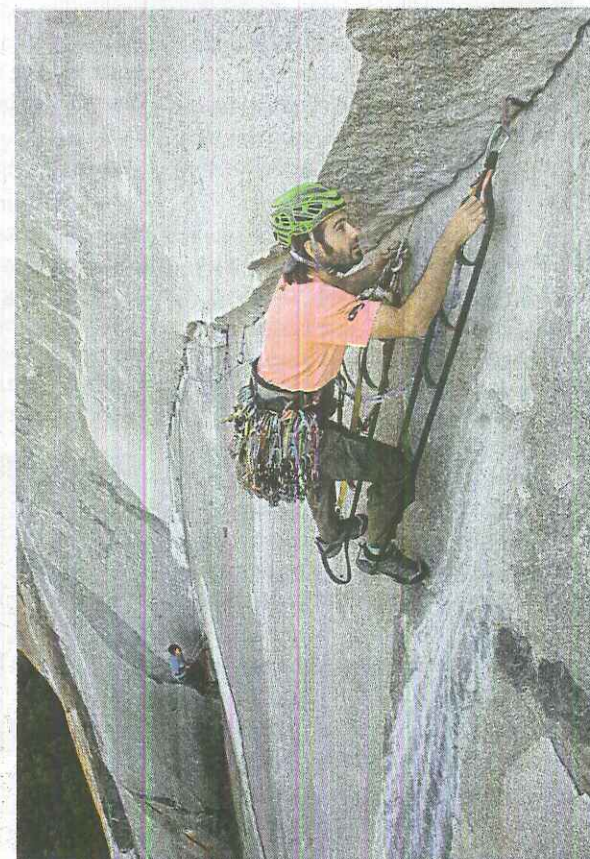
Though make their mark they did. Getting up each day at 4am to beat the heat, on the first day they climbed New Jersey Turnpike in 12:24 (speed record), the second day Tangerine Trip in 9:28 (speed record), and on the third day Eagle's Way in 7:56 (speed record). The fourth day was considered a rest day, climbing The Nose in 5:16, giving them surplus time to ice their hands and legs in the river, and take a shower. On the fifth day, they climbed Lurking Fear in 5:05, hitting the same time on the sixth day on Zodiac, and finishing with Triple Direct in 5:15 (speed record).

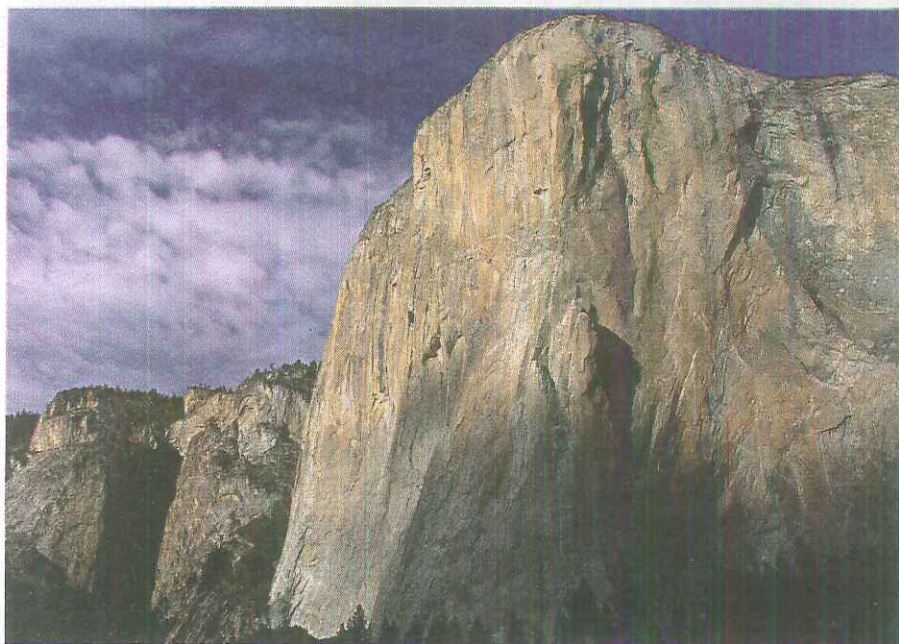
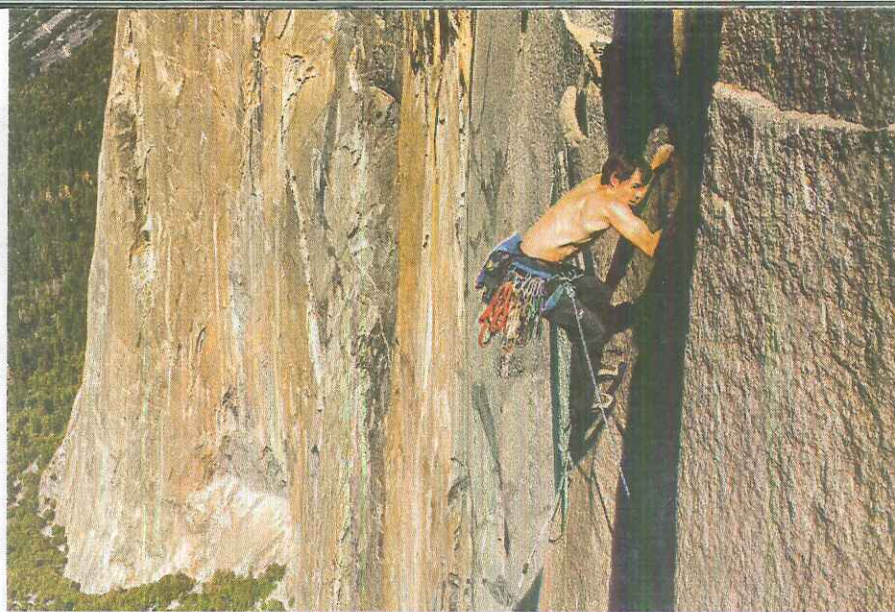
Allfrey is primarily an aid climber, having learned about efficient big wall climbing from local Santa Cruz climber Scott Lappin, and Honnold is a legendary free and solo climber. With their individual strengths, the two of them were the best pair to take on this challenge, which Honnold equated with "a really good runner running a 50k every day for a week."

Allfrey had some doubts before they started, putting their chances of pulling it off at about 65%. Honnold, however, didn't have any doubts. "It was just a matter of

Above: Alex looking ripped and moving fast while free climbing on Zodiac (Gabriel Mange).

Right: Dave setting a cam hook on day six. Fast and efficient aid climbing was crucial for success (Gabriel Mange).





how hard it would be. If it would really suck or just be sort of hard. The first few days were pretty hard [but] felt pretty good near the end."

As they climbed, Allfrey listened to a range of music including reggae (to Honnold's dismay), bluegrass and heavy metal. Honnold listened to modern rock and Allfrey's occasional singing.

Despite feeling like they were climbing slowly, they passed other climbers along the way. Honnold recalled Allfrey describing it as "climbing like snails, but the fastest snails on the mountain."


At the end of each climb, they'd rerack before walking down. "A weird experience," noted Allfrey, "since usually you'd just shove your gear into the bag and hike down. Instead, we were standing on the mountain to get the rack together for the next day's climb."

Both have climbed in Yosemite for years. Honnold raved about Yosemite, "The walls—they're so mega. El Cap is the best piece of rock in the whole world at least that I've seen. I've seen a lot of rock now. It's just so inspiring. It's just so impressive and big. That's how I feel every time I come back—it's still totally mega."

Showcasing the history of climbing on the "mega" walls, and essentially proving just how ridiculous and amazing the 7 in 7 was, is the feature film *Valley Uprising*. Released September 2014 for Reel Rock, the Sender Films production examines the evolution of Yosemite climbing from the 1950s to today where the likes of Honnold take less acid (it's how Honnold describes the difference between climbing in the Valley now vs. the '70s) and take on increasingly challenging linkups.

What's next for Yosemite climbing? For Honnold, he thinks, "In a few more years, more people will do the Triple [Mt. Watkins, El Capitan, and Half Dome]." And for him personally, "I'm hoping to do hard free climbing objectives, like some of Tommy [Caldwell]'s routes on El Cap. I would do other linkups; that's kind of the whole fun of climbing—come up with arbitrary goals and then do them."

Allfrey climbed the Triple in under 24 hours with Cheyne Lempe, the third pair to do so, only a few days after the 7 in 7. He hadn't been planning on it, but "Alex brought up the idea. If Alex Honnold is feeling 100% confident that you can do this other life goal of yours, then you're like yeah, you've got to at least give it a try."

Check out *Valley Uprising* at Reel Rock, and if you see Allfrey and Honnold out climbing, just play it cool (it's hard to do, I know). They're just regular guys who climbed El Cap seven times in seven days. 

Top: Confidently running it out through 5.11 terrain, Honnold has changed the game in Yosemite (Gabriel Mange).

Bottom: El Cap continues to be relevant. Even for many European climbers it is simply the most inspiring piece of rock in the world (Kenny Karst).





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