

Press Release September 2014

## **Shark Tooth by Fair Means**

A Swiss/Italian team returns from a 32 day high-arctic kayak and climbing adventure in north-east greenland

**Silvan Schüpbach, Christian Ledergerber (both swiss) and Matteo della Bordella (Italian) set out to climb the striking 900m north-east face of Shark Tooth. Shark Tooth is a stunning granit spire in Renland, north east greenland. This part of greenland is extremely remote and unexplored. From the outset the goal was to do the first ascent of this wall in the best possible style: by fair means, clean and climbing free. They were in for a committing, testing and very exposed adventure.**

Silvan and Christian (aka Laddy) passed by Shark Tooth after climbing the Mirror Wall in 2012. While the summit of Shark Tooth has been reached by the russians Mikhail Mikhailov and Alexander Ruchkin who climbed the north-west ridge in 2008 the wall was still untouched. Late 2013 Matteo della Bordella (Italy) joined the team and the three committed to their first fair means expedition. From Ittoqqortoormiit, the closest human settlement, they planned to cover over 200 km by kayak in order to reach Skillebugt and then another 20 km on foot in order to reach the base of the wall. After climbing they would have to retrace their approach route to reach civilization.

Since no team member had previous kayak experience all three had to first learn the basic paddle strokes and rescue techniques. They had to find the ideal kayak, dry suite and paddle and had to learn how to pack a kayak. After sending the kayaks, all the climbing gear and food by boat from Denmark the team finally started from Ittoqqortoormiit on August 5<sup>th</sup>.

On the very first day of paddling it became evident that paddling in Scoresby Sund has little in common with training on a lake. Big ocean swell and choppy waves on top tested their ability to stay upright. Luckily, the conditions improved. Spotting many muskox, seals, sea birds and a polar bear and passing close to cracking ice bergs kayaking proved to be an intimate and profoundly touching way to experience such a remote, untouched place. After six more days of paddling in excellent conditions and two days of hiking the three established base camp at the base of shark tooth. Kayaking, the big unknown was over for the moment. Back to business as usual.

The wall was climbed in three days. On the first day seven pitches of mossy and sandy slabs were climbed in heavy boots. Unfortunately, the next day the first seven pitches of the headwall turned out to be of sketchy, brittle quality. The climbing was extremely demanding and the north-facing and cold nature of the wall gave it a severe touch. Giving their absolute best, nobody fell. On the third day the rock quality finally improved and another nine excellent pitches completed their perfect on-sight first ascent. The team slept once more on the summit of their dreams and then rappelled the ridge climbed by the Russians. This completed "The Great Shark Hunt", 900m, 25 pitches. The grading shall be left to repeaters, who will only find two bolts on the route. One was used for seconding a 30m traverse, the other for hanging the portaledge.

With much time left at the base camp two more climbs were completed. Oasis, 600m, 7a and a classic ice and mixed line up a prominent peak, possibly marking its first ascent. Then the team returned early. However, the arctic fall held much colder, wetter and windier

conditions than the summer. On three days they were unable to move due to storm and on most other days it was either rainy or foggy. Gritting their teeth they nevertheless made good progress and reached an abandoned hut 25 km before Ittoqqortoormiit. Matteo: "We had four spare days left. We knew that if the weather gods were not too mean we had made it." At six in the morning Laddy heard the sniffing sounds of a big animal outside. It took him only seconds to realize that this could only be a polar bear. Trapped in the sleeping bag he started yelling to scare it away. Nevertheless, the polar bear pushed open two doors and by the time it was standing in the middle of the room also Matteo and Silvan were making as much noise as possible. Maybe this last great team effort had a deciding influence on the bear. It turned around and walked out the door. Laddy: "Being able to observe these animals in their natural habitat is amazing. But being able to smell the bad air from their mouth is one step too close". Silvan: "This encounter made us realize that such a trip is only over, if it is really over. You have to stay focused till the end." They finished it off on the same day.

**More information, pictures and text at: [www.slack-line.ch](http://www.slack-line.ch)**

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