

# **BIG BALDY (updated 12/1/2016)**

## **SEKIclimbing.com**

### **Intro**

Big Baldy is a dome just inside the border of Kings Canyon National Park. If you don't mind a snowy approach you can climb Big Baldy just about year-round as most of the climbs face south or west. No matter the season, the view from the 8,169 foot summit is an amazing panorama of the great western divide and the nearby Chimney Rocks.

Big Baldy rarely has climbers so you will probably be sharing the rock with a few lizards and birds. The rock quality is excellent and the climbs are mostly cracks of all difficulties with some clean knob and slab routes thrown in. The rock is fantastic but some of the cracks have lichen or moss from lack of traffic and many of the bolts are sketchy. These will likely both improve if you and your friends start climbing there!

The history of Big Baldy, as with many places in SEKI, is patchy due to the fact that many routes were put up by people on short visits or working seasonally in and around the park. Because of this I have done my best to track down information to present it here but there are likely gaps. Please let me know of any additions or corrections that will improve the guide.

### **Directions**

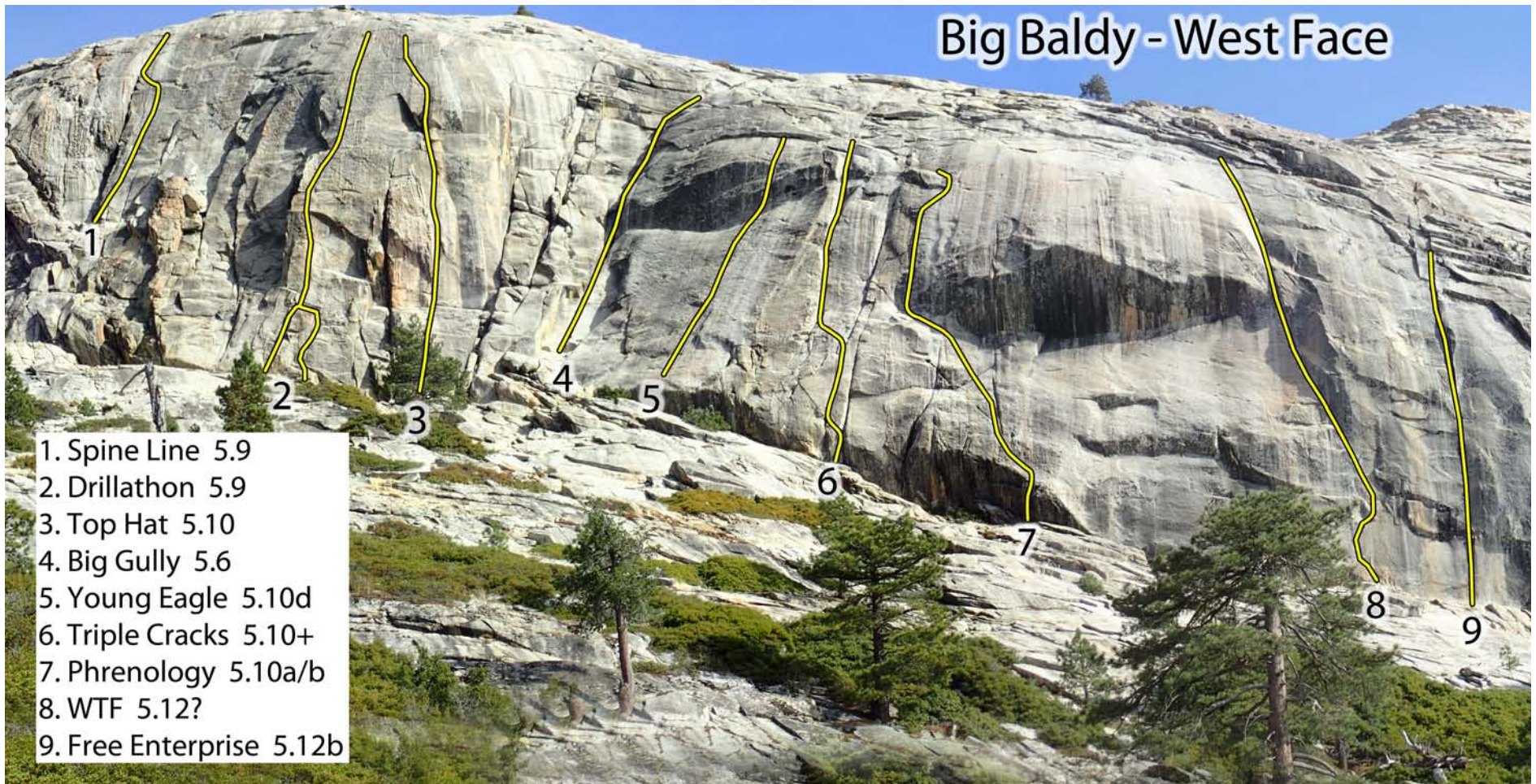
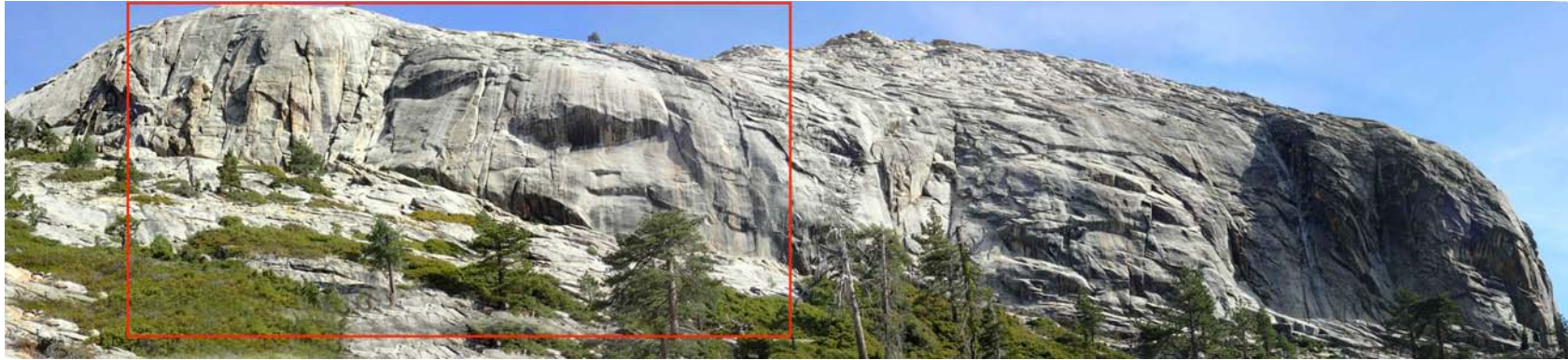
*SIDE NOTE: Most hiking and topo maps label Big Baldy at the end of a hiking trail at 9209 feet. This is the high point on the ridge and not the granite dome with all of the climbs. The real Big Baldy is about a mile south along the ridge from the high point.*

There are two ways to get to Big Baldy from the Generals Highway, which is usually closed during winter snowfall. please call (559)565-3341 (press 1, 1) for up to date road conditions.

1) A few miles north of the Montecito Lodge is the Big Baldy trailhead. The trail rises gently for a couple miles to the high point at Big Baldy Peak (8209 ft). An unmaintained trail goes roughly one more mile south to Big Baldy, the dome.

2) (preferred route, but seasonally closed road) From the Generals Highway, between the Big Baldy trailhead and the Stony Creek Lodge, take Road 14S29 west. There is a sign that reads "National Forest Organizational Camps, San Joaquin Far Horizons." Follow the main road and signs for about two and a half miles until a split. Go right up the hill (14S33) and take the most used road until you reach a radio/cell phone tower. From the tower hike up to the ridge and then follow it south about ½ mile.

To access the climbs do not walk all the way out on the summit but instead descend from the ridge along the base of the east or west face, depending on your destination. For south face routes the walk along the west face is longer but less technical while the walk along the east face is shorter but class 3. A walk off is necessary for most climbs though some have bolted anchors.



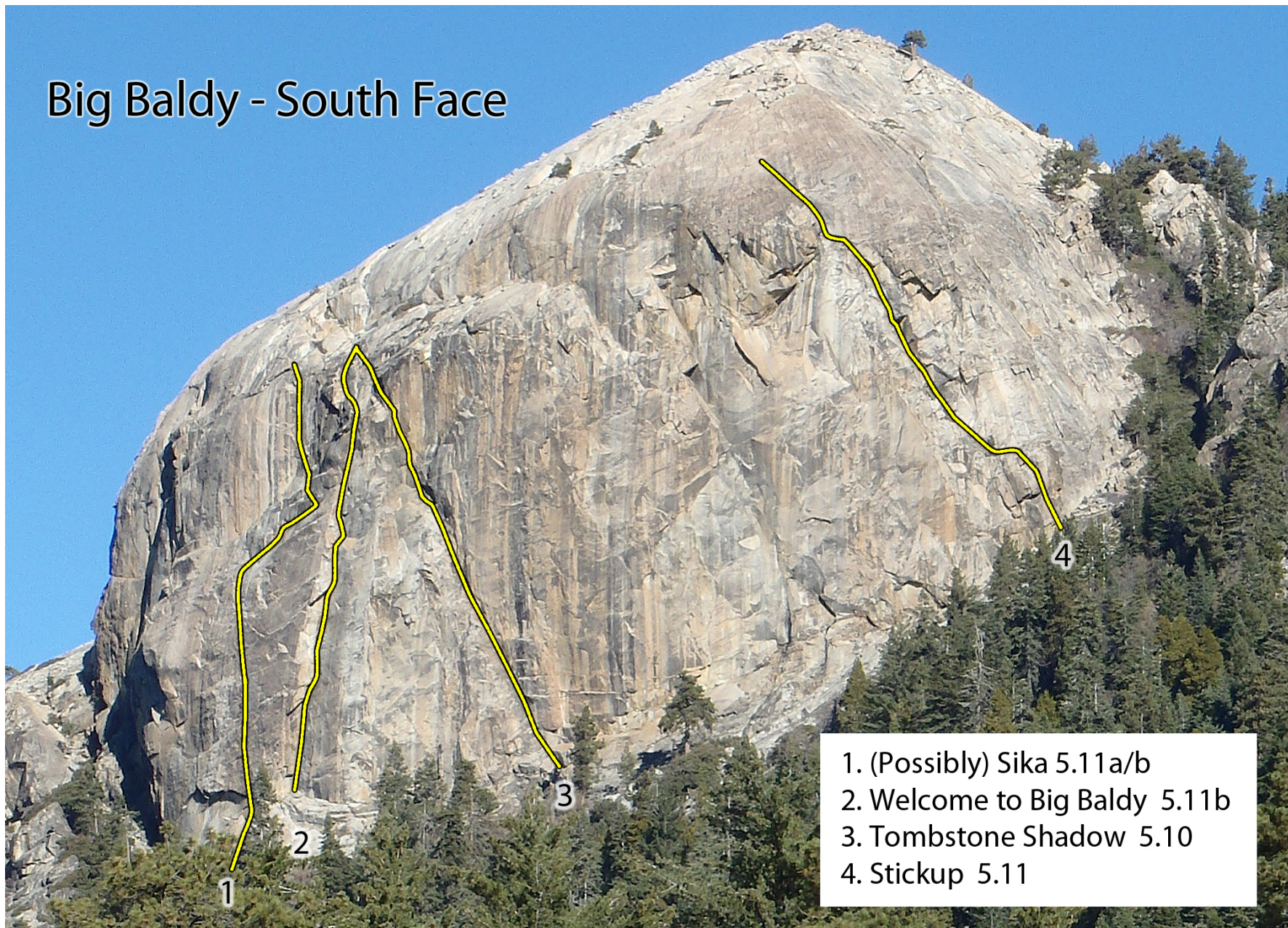
## BIG BALDY – WEST FACE

The better known and well documented routes lie on the left (north) end of the west face. There are many cracks, features and even a few old bolts on the right side of the wall. Please let me know if you climb some routes over there or know someone who has. I have toproped and led a few pitches on the right side but it is still mostly a mystery. Room to explore!

The routes below vary in length from 1-2 pitches depending on the length of your rope and how early you are willing to unrope. I will round up to be safe.

1. **5.9** 2 pitches **Spine Line** *2 bolts, singles from 0.5-1.5", a few more if building an anchor.*  
P1 The first route when descending along the west face. After a knob covered face there is a large crack and Spine Line is the dike going up the slab to the right of the crack. Third class blocks up towards the dike, follow the dike past two bolts and go left into the crack after the dike.  
P2 Follow the easy crack up.  
FA: Herb Laeger, Eric Rhicard 7/87
2. **5.9** 2 pitches **Drillathon** *Doubles from small to 2" and slings for knobs.*  
P1 To the right of the featured, blocky area is a large left facing corner. Locate the nice crack to the right of the corner. Getting to the crack is 5.9 from the left or 5.7 from the right. Belay at two bolts at the end of the crack.  
P2 Continue up easier face climbing.  
FA: Herb Laeger, Eric Rhicard 9/86
3. **5.10** 1 pitch **Top Hat** *Doubles to 3", one 4" and one 5 or 6" piece.* Find the overhanging orange face to the left of the low angled gully systems. This route follows the large crack on the right side of the overhang with one bolt past the end of the crack.  
FA: Eric Rhicard, Herb Laeger 7/87
4. **5.6** 1 pitch **Big Gully** *Doubles from small to 3".* The low angle gully/crack system to the left of an open slab. Sometimes used as a downclimb for other routes.  
FA: Herb Laeger, Eric Rhicard 7/87
5. **5.10d** 1 pitch **Young Eagle** *6 bolts, some small gear, and a few 1-3" pieces for an anchor.* To the right of the gully is a slab with a steep headwall. Traverse right from a shrubby tree to find the first bolt. Follow the bolts up and over the headwall to belay in an arching crack.  
FA: Herb Laeger, Eric Rhicard 7/87
6. **5.10+** 2 pitches **Triple Cracks** *Doubles from small to 3" and single 4 and 5".* Locate three crack between the slab on the left and a large roof on the right. Only two cracks reach the ground. Many variations are possible and the crux is getting off the ground (unless you traverse way in from the left). The most protected path is to start in the right crack, quickly move into the middle crack until it widens, then traverse into the left crack and follow it, belaying wherever.  
FA: Unknown and the name is made up.
7. **5.10a/b** 2 pitches **Phrenology** *8 bolts (half are bad), singles from small to 2".*  
P1 Below the large roof is an overhang at ground level. Climb the right side of the overhang and then trend up and left past 4 bolts and some small gear. Belay at the 5<sup>th</sup> bolt on a sloping ledge to the left of the big roof, backing it up with gear in a crack. **I'll mail \$100 to the first person to lead (free) the beautiful thin crack through the roof above P1, you'll know it when you see it.**  
P2 Follow the dike up past two more bolts and then trend up and right to the final bolt.  
FA: Herb Laeger, Eric Rhicard 7/87
8. **5.12R?** 2 pitches **WTF** *Two bolts, singles from small to 6".* This probably isn't 5.12 but it has serious fall potential so I didn't want to sandbag anyone. Find the crack on the right side of the big roof. Only two bolts and a fingertip size cam protect the moves getting to the crack with possible groundfall potential. Can easily link the route with a 70m rope, otherwise belay in the crack.  
FA: Unknown and the name is made up
9. **5.12b** 1 pitch **Free Enterprise** *1 bolt, doubles from small to 2" with maybe extra finger size.* A vertical, thin crack that almost reaches the ground to the right of the big roof. A bolt protects the crux down low, then mostly 5.10 climbing up an excellent (though moss filled) crack.  
FA: Eric Rhicard, Herb Laeger 7/87

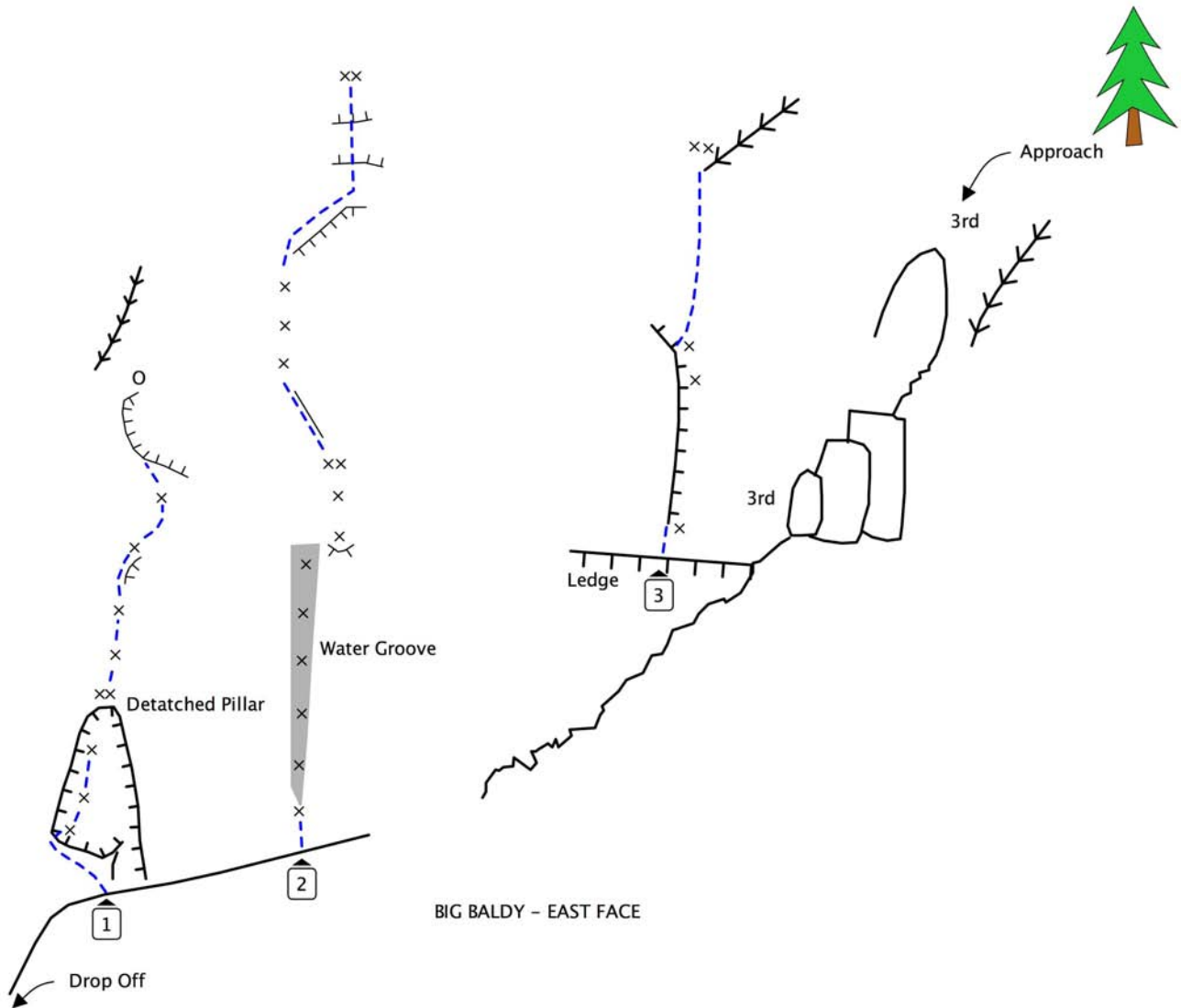
# Big Baldy - South Face



1. (Possibly) Sika 5.11 a/b
2. Welcome to Big Baldy 5.11 b
3. Tombstone Shadow 5.10
4. Stickup 5.11

## BIG BALDY – SOUTH FACE

1. **5.11a/b** 3 pitches **Skika** *1 bolt, doubles to 3"*. This may be Sika or may be some other unknown route. I have not climbed it to make sure and don't know anyone who has. Beware that the info might not be accurate.  
P1 Start in a large, left facing corner with a hand crack on the steep south face. Continue into a left leaning thin, runout crack with a bolt above it.  
P2 Traverse through three roofs.  
P3 Follow the path of least resistance to the summit, possibly a crack on the right side of the headwall 3 bolted 165 foot raps reach the base.  
FA: Ian Katz and friend
2. **5.11b** 4 pitches **Welcome to Big Baldy** *Doubles to 3" with extra 0.4-0.75" and one 4"*.  
P1 Find the obviously clean, big right facing corner with several roofs. Climbs past the first two roofs and belay near the old bolt.  
P2 Pass one more roof and belay at a sloping ledge below the next small roof.  
P3 Continue up to a ledge and belay at a bolted anchor on the left side.  
P4 Rap with two ropes to another bolted anchor and down, or continue up via a number of options, the easiest being the left slot with some vegetation.  
FA: Eric Rhicard, Herb Laeger 9/86
3. **5.10** 3 pitches **Tombstone Shadow** *Doubles up to 4.5"*  
P1 Find the huge, left facing corner angling up and left across the south face. 3<sup>rd</sup> class to the corner, then follow it to a small ledge at the base of a black streak.  
P2 Continue up the cracks, face climb left around a block, then belay at the top of the chimney above.  
P3 Go left from the top of the chimney then easy climbing to the summit  
FA: Eddie Joe, Roy Swafford, Barry Fowlie, 5/87
4. **5.11** 3 pitches **Stickup** *Doubles up to 3" maybe extra finger sized, some runners.*  
P1 Towards the right edge of the south face is a small pine tree about 30 feet up the wall. The route follows the corner between the two giant roofs above. Get to the tree any way you like, traversing in from the east is easiest. Belay at a three bolt anchor at the start of the corner past the tree.  
P2 Follow the corner to a roof with a bolt under it. Pass the roof on the left side (crux, but safe) and belay at a two bolt anchor.  
P3 Either continue up the corner to the summit or sling runout knobs straight up off the belay.  
FA: Unknown and the name is made up.



BIG BALDY – EAST FACE

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1. **5.8+** 2 pitches **Red Asses Psycho** *7 bolts, singles to 3"*.  
 P1 Descend along the east face and after going down some 3<sup>rd</sup> class look for a detached pillar. Climb the bolts up the face of the pillar to a bolted anchor in the wall on top.  
 P2 Follow the bolts up and through some small corners to a groove.  
 FA: Traponese, Slick Watts, Dwight Kroll 7/01
2. **5.10c** 2 pitches **Bald Monkey** *11 bolts, slings for knobs, singles from small to 2"*. Location for this route has not been confirmed so it may be elsewhere.  
 P1 Start up towards the shallow trough 50 feet to the right of a pillar downhill from the 3<sup>rd</sup> class section. First bolt is 20 feet off the ground. After the 6<sup>th</sup> bolt traverse right to a recess and then up to a bolted anchor.  
 P2 Follow a thin seam up and left, then three bolts 20 feet past the seam lead to a right slanting ramp. From a terrace at the end of the ramp climb up through overlaps for 50 feet to a bolted anchor. Walk off or rap with two ropes.  
 FA: Archer, Hayashi, Daly date unknown
3. **5.8** 1 pitch **Barry's Little Teapot** *Three bolts, small gear*. Descend along the east face, down some 3<sup>rd</sup> class and look for a ledge going out on the face. Climb the left facing corner off the ledge and continue up when it ends to a bolted anchor at a groove.  
 FA: Dwight Kroll, Slick Watts 7/01