

Application to Replace and Relocate Bolt on Super Slab, 4th Pitch

Spring 2011

Information from the FHRC

Existing Bolt Location: This is an application to replace and relocate the existing bolt on the crux pitch 4 of Super Slab. Currently, this bolt is placed approximately 15 feet above the belay ledge. The climbing from the belay ledge up to this bolt is in the 5.6 to 5.7 range, with opportunities for traditional gear, including a placement approximately three feet below the existing bolt. Moderate climbing in the 5.6 to 5.7 range continues for another two feet or so past the existing bolt, then becomes markedly more difficult in the 5.10 to 5.10+ range for the next 10-15 feet (the crux section). A lead fall high in this crux section (before there is opportunity for additional gear placements) could result in a 20-25 foot fall which could land the leader on the belay ledge and/or on the belayer. In fact, there are examples of such falls, including one by the Applicant, who seeks to prevent such a potentially injurious fall for others.

Proposed Bolt Location: The Applicant proposes to replace and relocate the existing bolt by 24 inches (23 inches higher, and 7 inches left of the existing bolt). This proposed location is marked by a white "X" in the picture below provided by the Applicant. Also below is a picture take from the belay ledge, showing the existing bolt and the proposed location marked by a white "X". The proposed bolt location is in a red-colored band of the main slab, and would be in very solid rock—just as solid as the rock at the existing bolt. Most competent climbers taller than 5'2" would be able to clip the bolt in the proposed location from the end of the moderate climbing (5.6 to 5.7) and from a relatively "good" stance, with gear near their feet if they chose to place it. The quality of the best holds at this "clipping stance" is unlikely to change in the near future. They are not flakes subject to breakage; they are solid aspects of the slab. (There is a hollow flake to the right that many climbers use, but if this were to detach, the route could still be climbed in other ways with no change in rating or protection). The moves immediately after this stance are harder, in the 5.10 range, and continue in the 5.10 to 5.10+ range for the next 10-15 feet through the crux section. With the relocation, a lead fall from high in this crux section (before additional solid gear can be placed) could result in a 15-20 foot fall, but the leader would not likely hit the belay ledge or the belayer. The leftward relocation of the bolt proposed by the Applicant is intended to further reduce the likelihood of a collision with the belay ledge or the belayer as the rope tightens. The ledge drops significantly to the left, so a fall onto the bolt at the proposed location may result in a slight leftward swing away from the ledge and the belayer.

FHRC Recommendations on Bolt Placement: If this Application is approved by the FHRC through the public review process, the following factors should be addressed by the installer.

- (1) There is more than one way to climb this section of the route. Care should be taken to relocate the bolt to a location that can be reached by average-sized climbers from any of these tracks, before entering the crux section. This is especially important regarding the leftward relocation of the existing bolt, because a climber who chooses to climb a track to the right may not be able to reach the bolt if it is placed any farther left than what is shown by the white "X" in the pictures below. A couple of inches to the right would be OK also.
- (2) The bolt should be stainless steel, 3/8" or 1/2" diameter, and at least 3.5 inches long.
- (3) The bolt should also be painted so as to match the color of the surrounding rock ("camouflaged").
- (4) The existing bolt should be removed and the old placement filled and "patched" to make is less noticeable.

Historic Background: The quality of gear in this section of Super Slab has long been a subject of some controversy, and everyone has their own opinion (for example, see discussion at:

http://www.mountainproject.com/v/colorado/boulder/eldorado_canyon_sp/105749728).

This controversy is further confounded by the fact that rockfall has changed the difficulty and protection since the First Free Ascent (FFA) (Levin, 2009. Eldorado Canyon: A Climbing Guide).



Photo from belay ledge (zoomed in) showing existing bolt and proposed bolt relocation (white tape).

Information from the Applicant

Eldorado Canyon Fixed Hardware Application Form to Move Bolt on Super Slab, 4th Pitch



Figure 1: Left: Climber from MountainProject.com on fourth pitch of Super Slab; gear at climber is probably “RP’s”. One might hit the belayer or belay ledge if a fall were to occur while placing these. Right: Tape Showing Proposed Bolt Re-Location. Tape is approximately twenty-three inches above the existing bolt and approximately seven inches to the left.

This is an application to move the bolt up and to the left on what is now the run-out (R/X) section on the fourth pitch on Super Slab. The bolt would probably be similar to the existing 3/8-inch bolt (which would be removed).

When I led this climb around 3-4 years ago, better protection was to be had just below where the climber’s foot is shown on the left photo of [Figure 1](#) as well as in the horizontal mini-roof extending below and to the right of the climber. However, it is no longer possible to place such protection--as the newer (Steve Levin) guidebook says of the fourth pitch: “. . . then a large flake on the higher “Super” Slab broke off rendering the climbing hard 5.10 and eliminating several gear placements. Since then, fixed pins have also fallen out, and nowadays climbers must fiddle in tiny cams and wires from insecure stances to protect these delicate moves. Many consider the climb R-rated.”

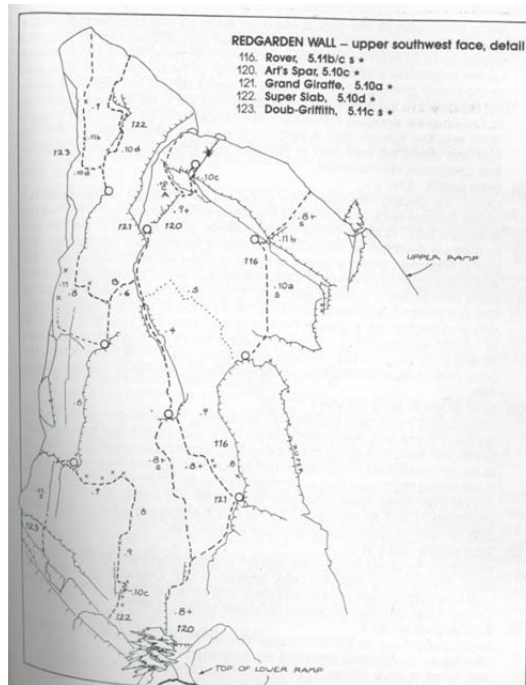


Figure 2: Topo of Super Slab area from Rossiter's [Boulder Climbs South](#)

Recently on the fourth pitch of this climb, I fell while trying to fiddle in a small brass nut (where the protection is shown just below climber in *Figure 1*). One of the Camalots on my rack hit my belayer in the left arm—and another apparently broke his sunglasses. Fortunately, he was holding my belay in his right hand and caught me with my helmet a few feet above the belay ledge, saving my foolish self. (Note that this was an annoyingly-tight belay held by someone perhaps 25 pounds heavier than me.)

If any climb in Eldorado deserves a better bolt placement, it appears to be this one. It is rated as a mega-classic (without an R or an X rating) in the Rossiter and Levin guidebooks as well as on Mountain Project. It has the name, character, and significant fixed gear (mostly pins) of many face climbs. While moving the bolt up would make clipping it a bit spicier, one would probably still avoid hitting the belay ledge during a fall while clipping the bolt because of the 0.4 Camalot that might typically be placed just below one's foot. Additionally, moving the bolt up would certainly facilitate avoiding the belay ledge while wiggling in the "RPs" many feet above the bolt. (This is in part due to the fact that the belay ledge below drops off to the left.) Overall, it appears likely that the spice on this crux section would remain but with fewer calls for Search and Rescue.

Area: Super Slab is perhaps the most famous climb in this area (the upper southwest face of the Redgarden Wall)

Length: Four Pitches (320 Feet in total).