TRAM FACE

SQUALLYWOOD
Ultra Bonus Chapter

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Introduction

Tram Face commands the attention of anyone driving into Squaw Valley as it abruptly rises nearly 1,200 feet straight up from the valley floor. The rock is primarily decomposed granite, which does not make for great climbing. But the skiing? There’s nothing like it. The entire face offers an array of runs from extremely difficult on rider’s right to easier and more open “advanced” runs towards the end of the ridge on rider’s left.

Ever since expert skiers entered the valley, tram face has drawn them in and encouraged them to grace its precipitous slopes. Lito Tejeda-Flores, Steve McKinney, The Becks, Rick Sylvester, Tom Day, and countless expert riders over the years have succumbed to the draw and found themselves on what is arguably some of the best steep skiing in North America. Given the fact it is forbidden terrain, many of these descents were done at odd hours, with the riders harvesting what they could of the moonlight or the light from the sun just before it crept up over the horizon.

Snow quality on the face can be remarkably good, but conditions tend to be fickle given the easterly aspect of many of the lines. In December and January, the low sun angle allows snow to remain better longer. In February and March, the time windows are shorter, but the storms tend to plaster the steep lines better. Tram Chute, itself, tends to hold the best snow throughout the year, given its northerly aspect and the shading in the chute above where it dumps out onto the more sun exposed benches below. Rain tends to be another factor affecting snow on the face because snow levels in Tahoe often hover around 7,000 feet and Tram Tower 1 is at 7,400 feet.
But when the storms come in perfectly and avalanche risk is low, the quality of snow on these runs can be spectacular top to bottom.

Avalanche risk on Tram Face is a huge concern on every single run and every single aspect. These runs - not just the ones on rider’s right - are exposed and could be devastating if done at the wrong times. Even the relatively gentle, loosely treed slopes above the middle portion of the face have shed massive slides. These are not areas in which a simple hand pit will do. Danger on these faces, many of which are convex, could lurk 10 to 15 feet beneath you. Anyone planning to enter Tram Face must monitor and keenly observe the snowpack over the course of days and weeks. Do not be cavalier!

Let’s briefly discuss rope skiing on the more exposed lines. While there is a traditional belief in skiing and snowboarding that descents should be pure and not rope protected, I am a full believer in using ropes when indicated. Think of skiing just like climbing. On most exposed climbs, its very reasonable to use a rope just as it should be when you are skiing steep and exposed terrain. It’s not worth dying doing this sport and if a rope keeps you alive and safe, then by all means use one. Plus, ropes will open up descents that you would never get on otherwise. Mole’s Chute is a fantastic ski and a standard rope length will get you right where you need to be to adequately assess for blue ice in the middle. All the lines described here, with the exception of Keep Squaw True (#9), have been skied without a rope. Yet, personally, if I were ever to return to #2, 3, 7, 8, or 9 again, I’d use a rope.
SQUALLYWOOD

TF 1: Sylvester’s Slot (AKA Snuffleupagus): The large hanging snowfield on the rider’s right side of Tram Face marks the start of this proud run. The snowfield empties into a tight snout that runs a couple hundred feet before it opens back up to an apron below. Anyone who has stood at the top of this line has felt the airiness of the upper convexity. It holds the perfect pitch for slides and there is no easy way to escape if one were to occur. But when the snow is stable on the face and the sun has not yet baked the snow in the chute, this run is one for your memory bank. If Sylvester’s wasn’t enough, you can double up, by turning left out of the snout and heading over to a very covert area called, “The Clubhouse”.

Difficulty: 4
Pitch: 40 degrees
Fun Factor: ***

Map 1: Sylvester’s Slot (1), Big Boy (1b), The KK Line (2), Half Baked (3), Tram Chute Steep Entrance (4), Hidden Gem (4b), Tram Chute Middle Entrance (5), Tram Chute Left Entrance (6), Lua’s Lane (7), Mole’s Chute (8), Keep Squaw True (9), Gnarnia (10), Daydreams (11), Sluice Way (12).
TF 1b:  *Big Boy*: For now, the name “Big Boy” is a placeholder. Just about every world class rider who has gazed up and dreamed about doing lines on Tram Face has had this one in their sights. But amazingly, it has never been done. It’s hard to say why because it has shaped up quite often over the years. Maybe it’s because most Tram Face riders are out there in the dark or with low visibility, milky, early morning light. Daylight would shift the desirability of this one substantially.

- **Difficulty:** ?
- **Pitch:** approximately 45 degrees
- **Fun Factor:** ?

TF 2:  *The KK Line*: Kent Kreitler skied many lines across Tram Face over the years, but in 1998 he was finally able to get into this zone, which he had been fantasizing about for many years. He trimmed tree branches around his house so he could see the entire Tram face from his home, providing him the opportunity to closely monitor the conditions on all the lines. When he was home on break from his ski travels, the conditions happened to line up just right with a Pacific storm that left a very stable and plastering snowpack. He knew it was THE time to go up and get it. So he skinned up early morning with my brother, Scott, and at the top shared just a few words. “I’m going down a new way. Can you wait for me below and make sure I get through OK?” He made it through and to this day, after skiing difficult mountains around the world, still considers this a very high level/high consequence line.

This is one of the more technically difficult lines on Tram Face and requires a great pacific storm pack to come into shape. Steep snow flutes form its character and the image of looking down them will forever be burned into the mind of anyone who descends it.

It begins on the prominent unsupported hanging snowfield of Sylvester’s and then drops left over the blind rollover. There’s a bushy tree and typically a steep spine that marks the start of the hardest section. Here is where a rider will pause and meditate on their commitment. The direct fall line, which often looks great from afar, is usually thin, strewn with rocks and ice and has terrible consequences. So the best line trends down and left. The pitch in here is such that the uphill shoulder might be touching snow and each turn has to be carefully contemplated. The face empties into a connector chute that spills right and into a tight stricture. A relatively easy billy goating move or airplane turn through the stricture leads into the exit chute, which is north facing and often has excellent snow.

- **Difficulty:** 9
- **Pitch:** 55-60 degrees
- **Fun Factor:** ****
- **Rope:** Good idea

TF 3:  *Half Baked*: I skied Half Baked with the help of Kip Garre and Andrew Parkhill. The previous summer we had mapped the necessary rope lengths for various ski belay options across Tram Face and this run measured up just right. The upper portion of Half Baked is convex and hanging and even though the avalanche risk was low, we used rope on this section to take out
risk that would come from any sluff, no matter how small. Later the same year, a set of beautiful,
early morning tracks graced the run. Then two weeks later, another set showed up. The culprit?
Dave Baker. I asked Dave if he could name the shot and, having experienced the great snow on
one side and the crusty snow on the other, he appropriately called it Half Baked.

The entrance to Half Baked feels and is lofty. Assessing the stability of snow above the crux is
difficult and is the reason a rope is recommended here. The crux move is a left sided 10-15 foot
cliff jump into the top of the connector chute described in “The KK Line,” above. Up high, the
connector chute is often crusty because of its easterly aspect as well as the “oven” effect created
by bordering rocks. Fortunately, rolling off to the rider’s left side of the connector chute puts you
on a short but really fun, steep, north facing rib that often has good snow. From here, there is a
likely connection over to Tram Chute proper. But to date, all takers have proceeded down to the
exit described in The KK Line.

**Difficulty:** 9  
**Pitch:** 50-55 degrees with a short 60 degree section  
**Fun Factor:** ***  
**Rope:** Good idea

**TF 4: Tram Chute, Steep Entrance:** Tram Chute is a spectacular run - there’s no question.
Tucked in a deep cleft in Tram Face, this north facing shot is like an ice box that holds good
snow for days while the rest of the face gets baked. It’s an easy access run and the pitch generally
hovers in a manageable, mid 40 degree range. But these elements should not erase your
vigilance. This is a serious run that deserves your respect. People who have entered too soon
after storms, or after wind loading events, have been swept away and are lucky to be alive. If the
snow that fills the broad upper sections were to slide, it would all funnel and fire through the
tight exit chute, hundreds of feet below. Think of the physics. With this disclaimer, when the
avalanche conditions are truly low, this is one of Tahoe’s premier descents.
Tram Chute has three main, short entrances and each one sets the tone of the run. Steep Entrance is the furthest rider’s right. When the snow fills in well, you can even click in on top of the pinnacle above the left side of this entrance. Below that, the turns are steep and during most years, push the 50+ degree mark. The right side is a bit gentler and in the 45 degree range. In a few turns, all entrances meet, and below that, the pitch drops slightly but then holds for the duration of the chute. Typically, about 1/4th of the way down, the line is left of a large protruding rock, but sometimes snow fills in and makes the right side of the rock an option. Occasionally, the rock itself forms into a fun steep spine. The chute then opens broadly before choking back down into the exit corridor which is deeply inset. This corridor is one to two ski lengths wide and provides a unique finish to such a magical descent.

Often the fun doesn’t stop there, especially early in the winter when the snow down on the lower benches stays dark and cold. But at other times you’ll run into crust and even massive, frozen rubble piles. So be aware.

**Difficulty:** 6

**Pitch:** 50 degree entrance, 40-45 degrees in chute.

**Fun Factor:** ****
TF 4b: *Hidden Gem:* After a few Tram Chute runs, you might be looking for a little change up. Hidden Gem offers that and more. Just under half way down the main Tram Chute, after the tight section, traverse high right and over the ridge. You’ll be looking right down this beauty. Hidden Gem is tight and steep and can be particularly difficult in pitch black. But in the light of day, it becomes easy to manage. The fall line sweeps right and then left, down on the apron between the exits of The KK Line and Tram Chute. There might be some crust just before you exit the chute, but get ready for some great snow on the upper portion of the north facing apron.

**Difficulty:** 6  
**Pitch:** 45–48 degrees  
**Fun Factor:** ****

TF 4c: *Exit Ribs:* To the rider’s left of Tram Chute’s exit corridor are a series of three ribs which, every few years, shape up nicely. Be sure they have enough snow before venturing out there. While they are short, they are steep and quite fun.
Well above the exit corridor, traverse high left, up and over the ridge and you’ll be standing right above them. Like all those before you, you’ll appreciate the roll over effect.

**Difficulty:** 6  
**Pitch:** 50+ degrees  
**Fun Factor:** ****

**TF 5: Tram Chute, Middle Entrance:** This is the easiest of the three entrances. In fact, after a turn or two, you’ll merge with the other two entrances thinking to yourself, ‘this isn’t too bad.’ But then the reality of the rest of Tram Chute will take hold. As stated above, it’s a real deal chute with real deal consequences, so don’t be misled by the pedestrian quality of this entrance.

**Difficulty:** 5  
**Pitch:** 40-45 degrees  
**Fun Factor:** **

**TF 6: Tram Chute, Left Entrance:** The left entrance is the most heavily used. It also has a grand quality, positioned between two buttresses, with Lua’s Lane on the left. The entrance is usually gradual and bulbous as it rolls in and drifts toward the right, over to the gut of the chute. Like the other two entrances, it is short. But compared to the middle, it feels more committing.

**Difficulty:** 5  
**Pitch:** 40-45 degrees  
**Fun Factor:** ***

**TF 7: Lua’s Lane:** On many levels, Lua’s Lane is, hands down, the most aesthetic steep line on Squaw and perhaps across all of Tahoe. It juts upward toward the heavens and is marked by precipitous drop offs on all sides. In 2004, I was happy to belay Andrew Parkhill off the top pitch, which is gorgeous. Just take the tram up, which passes right by it, and you’ll see. Once Andrew slid in, he unclipped and carefully and methodically made his way down the rest of the route. When I heard the celebratory shout, I crossed over onto the run from the top of Mole’s Chute and then followed his tracks down.

A couple years passed by and Andrew, being modest as he is, had not yet named the line. In the spring of 2006, his girlfriend at the time, Lua, passed away from a tragic accident at Alpine Meadows, leaving Andrew in a state of searching for ways to honor and celebrate her life. That’s when it came to him. The next summer he climbed back up to the top of the line, placed Lua’s Vermont license plate next to the small tree on top, and named the run Lua’s Lane.

In 2009, I ventured up to Lua’s with Jason Abraham and skied off the top without a rope (which I wouldn’t do again). Jason traversed over from Mole’s Chute and we skied the Lane down to the final cliff band before traversing back into Tram Chute where we shared high fives.
The Lua’s Lane experience starts with the scramble up its rocky peak and doesn’t let up until you’ve descended all the way back down. The scramble is not for the faint of heart, especially in heavy, bulky ski boots. When you crest the top and finally stand up confident and straight, you get a bird’s eye view of Tram Chute and Mole’s Chute and a profile shot of Keep Squaw True. Lua’s Lane falls out from below you towards the west part of the valley floor. There’s a small, but sturdy tree, perfectly placed right on top, where you put your boards on. It acts a bit like a comforting friend offering a branch to grab onto (make sure it’s still sturdy if you use it!).

The first turn on the upper pitch is an extremely steep right hander that is better described as a controlled fall to the bench below. Fall line drifts left down into Mole’s Chute and the goal is to get right and onto the bench. Once on the bench, the pitch lightens up considerably, but then rolls back over for the duration of the run. From here, the line continues down the center until the medium size pine tree on the right towards the bottom. This typically marks the deepest “on snow” exit point before entering the no-man’s land below. Some years, snow flutes have connected straight through, but I’m not aware of anyone who was there to ski them. The exit leaves you fairly high up in Tram Chute proper, with all kinds of celebratory options below.

**Difficulty:** 9  
**Pitch:** 60 degrees on first pitch, then 50 degrees.  
**Fun Factor:** ****  
**Rope:** Good idea.

**TF 8: Mole’s Chute:** Since Mole’s is the most defined shot coming down from tram tower 1, people who aren’t familiar with the area commonly mistaken it to be Tram Chute or Sylvester’s Slot. As stated in the Forbidden Areas chapter, allegedly, Tom “The Mole” Caramila made
history in the early ’70s by making his way down on a pair of 120cm skis. This line does not get skied often and for good reason. Water melting off adjacent cliffs tends to stream right down its gut, forming solid blue ice, which is often hidden beneath the snow. But when one pays attention to all the important details, this line can offer an amazing experience. It’s remarkably steep, straight as an arrow, and it’s a direct fall line shot, offering a view of the valley far below you for the entire descent.

If there’s a place to get a rope out on Tram Face, this is it. There are great anchor opportunities above it and a standard rope length will get you far enough into the chute that you can fully assess the snow and what’s underneath it. Particular care should also be made to assess the hang fire on rider’s left. You don’t want anything shedding from above you on this one.

- **Difficulty:** 9
- **Pitch:** 55-60 degrees
- **Fun Factor:** ****
- **Rope:** Good idea

**TF 9: Keep Squaw True:** This is a rope only line. Why risk it!

Keep Squaw True begins from the highest ground. For anyone entering the valley, it will forever stand for the importance of being true to yourself, true to the communities you live in, and true to the lands around you. You might have inferred, it is the entire reason for this chapter.

We scoped and studied this line for over a decade and waited patiently for ideal conditions, which are essential on this one. We had a team of 4 people and several meetings over the years to run through the process. Our hope was to get a couple people down the line, but it was much more intensive than we previously thought. Much of the line gets direct sunlight and often by the time conditions shape up well and stabilize, the lower exit flank has already melted off. Conditions need to be 100% ideal for this run. Even with a rope, an avalanche would most likely be fatal. Finally in 2011, after a few failed attempts due to conditions, all the elements lined up perfectly and we were able to get on it.

Our crew began skinning up into Shirley Canyon. The moonlight shined brightly, the wind was still, and the snow was perfect. But as we rounded the horn and started making our way up the ridge, an inversion cloud formed in the valley and drifted up against the face. Up top, before the cloud consumed us and dimmed the light, we were able to place the protection. At midnight, it was “belay on” and Ming Poon dropped in on his snowboard, making careful turns down to the right where he’d establish the second anchor on a mature tree. That was a moment to remember, watching him put the first turns ever on that hanging snowfield. Ming and Jesse Bushey were our gear experts and they suggested I tie into both ropes, the one anchored above and the one that would be anchored on the lower tree. That way, we’d avoid any unnecessary rope work in the middle of the face. It turned out to be a good move because we had underestimated the scale on that part of the face. The distance between the second anchor and the actual line was much further and the rock abutments we had to maneuver the rope up and over were much bigger.
After a number of turns in, I recall the moment I heard Jesse’s voice crackle over the radio saying, “you have 10 more feet.” That was a bit of a shocker because the second anchor was still well below and way off to the right side. I unclipped the upper line and preceded to make turns down towards the rollover section. The inversion cloud got thicker, which turned the sky blacker and almost humid. The rope trailed off to the right, into the dark, and up over a ridge to where Ming sat quietly, first pulling it in and later feeding it out. A fall here would mean a massive pendulum swing down into the dark and perhaps result in an impact on the rock outcroppings or the tree on the exit ramp below. So further down, I stayed facing right, tediously yanking the rope up and out of the snow and downward, so that there was enough slack to make controlled
side hops. As much as I wanted to make a left turn, doing so would have hung up the rope deeply in the snow ridge, without any way of getting back out. This took forever.

Over the planning years, the goal was to take the line deep to the same elevation as the exit ramp tree. Then a quick traverse would lead onto the exit ramp and into the bottom of Mole’s Chute. But the rock abutments down there were way too tall to get the rope up and over and to head further fall line would have required coming off the rope. Nope, that wasn’t going to happen. As disappointing as it was, I found a shelf above the lowest one, which dropped to the right, over a small cliff and down towards the exit ramp tree. As expected the snow was crusty, which made the little air more interesting. Once at the exit ramp tree, I untied and traversed over and out. I radioed up to Andrew Parkhill, who was chomping at the bit to go, and informed him that it was just too involved to do another that night.

Standing at the bottom of Mole’s Chute, I could hear Ming pulling the rope and getting gear ready for his rappel. Not long after, he emerged from the dark, and by that time, Jesse and Andrew had carved their way down perfect Tram Chute conditions to meet us. We all looked at each other and laughed about the experience we were having - implicit in the moment was the question of whether this moment or this line had any greater significance…or not, beyond the fun and excitement that it undoubtedly delivered. Then we voted to let Ming take the bottom half first and the rest of us trailed through his cold smoke all the way to the valley floor. Needless to say, we followed that up with beers, sharing stories in Jesse’s apartment above Tamara McKinney’s garage.

The next morning, the tracks received a rash of criticism because of all the side hops and side slips down lower. You’re supposed to make beautiful turns down stuff like this, right? Ha! We didn’t care. We waited a decade for this one and we got it, in pitch dark, in near perfect snow, in the best way we could.

**Difficulty:** 9
**Pitch:** 45 degrees upper, 55 degrees middle, 50 degrees lower.
**Fun Factor:** ***
**Rope:** Necessary

**TF 10: Gnarnia:** Like “Big Boy,” the name “Gnarnia” is a placeholder. It, too, has been in the sights of many experts, but has never been ridden. Anyone who has stood up at the start of this has felt it; danger lurks in the upper snowfield and the steep traverse above dramatic exposure below. A good sized avalanche that occurred minutes before the start of the Freeride World Tour Tram Face event in 2010 (which was immediately cancelled) illustrated what it would look like if you happened to be on the face when it went. No good. If anyone ends up going for this someday, they’ll have to be fully aware of the fact that the entire upper snowfield is hanging, that the pitch dramatically increases just above the exposed traverse, and that there’s little chance of getting back across if the exit airs end up not looking good.

**Difficulty:** ?
**Pitch:** 40 degrees upper, 50 -55 degrees lower.
**Fun Factor:** ?
**Rope:** ?
TF 11: Daydreams: Daydreams is the kind of line that, once it enters your consciousness, it steals your attention whether you’re sitting at your desk, trying to go sleep, or having a conversation with your spouse. It’s all glory when it’s in its prime and only a handful of riders can attest to that. My brother, Scott, snagged the right variation one early morning and considers it to be the run of his life. But this run could be a nightmare if taken too lightly or attempted on the wrong day.

It begins with some great turns down a gentle upper pitch, then begins to roll over at two beautiful, large, granite pillars. Here you have 3 choices: the rider’s right which is heavily exposed, the middle where sluff tends to run, or the left which is the safest. However, a slide on any one of these routes would be devastating.

The right and middle routes tend to channel you to the gully that runs through the most difficult section. While the right option is fun, when you wrap back in, you’ll have to be aware of the sluff that could be charging down that gully. Taking the left route helps you avoid that issue, only if you opt to continue fall line over the steep roll over. The steep roll over is a blast, if it’s covered. Otherwise, you have to head into the gully. As you exit the boxy portion of the chute, you can head any direction, with the easiest routes to the right. The middle and left exits often require air.

**Difficulty:** 7, if ski over bulge in middle of box chute, 7+.

**Pitch:** 45-50+

**Fun Factor:** ****
TF 12: Sluiceway (AKA, The Dike): A leap of faith is what’s needed if you opt for this wicked and dangerous straightline. That’s what Shane McConkey took into it when he skied it in the winter of 2005.

The previous summer, my brother, Scott, and Shane hiked up its wet, mossy gut and that was the only scouting he got. That winter, Scott suggested it was ready and although Shane said he’d go scout it, he never got around to it. The next morning, he skinned up in the dark and never got a look at the line. Scott set up the camera on the opposite hillside. Once the sun rose on that grayish morning, Shane radioed Scott to ask if the line went, and even though the stair steps within the chute looked tricky, Scott figured he could deal with them and replied, “I think it does.” Shane skied into the line without hesitation, all except for a split second snowplow—a minuscule one—right as he finished his final turn to point it down the sluice. While he exited flawlessly, seeing that minute hesitation in his flow bugged him for the rest of his life whenever he saw that shot.
The snow inside the tight corridor is difficult to adequately assess, so when you drop in, you’re the rolling dice on what you’ll find. The little shelves inside the sluice could be covered with good snow or maybe they’ll be icy or rotten. Catching a tip or getting knocked off balance while traveling at a high rate of speed through this would not be a good thing. Sounding overly cautious? Take heed.

That being said, not many people have straightlined Sluiceway and of the few, one tumbled out of it because of bad snow toward the bottom. Personally, I’d rather put on snow blades and go spend some time inside, checking it out because it’s one of the more unique features on Tram Face.

From the start, descend through the nice open upper glade and head down to the left of the rock outcropping that splits this run and Daydreams. The deepest part of the gully wraps around and drops right into the corridor. There is a jagged upper portion of the corridor that can be avoided by staying up and on the left shelf. The entrance to the actual sluice will be unmistakable. Unless you want to know what it’s like to be flushed down a toilet, be keenly aware that any snow sluffing down from above is going to shoot right down this thing.

**Difficulty:** 9  
**Pitch:** 45 degrees  
**Fun Factor:** **

TF 13: *Hope:* With a name like this, your mind might naturally wander to the possible deeper meanings attached to this line. Let it go there because that matters. But then bring it back to something a little lighter and concrete, which is; you better hope there’s enough snow covering up the granite slabs on the lower section of this baby so you can get through. Good conditions on this line are fleeting. Like many of the lines in this chapter, this is a serious run. So watch it over time and assess it well to determine the coverage as well as where dangerous ice slabs could have built up.

From the starting point on the top ridge, head down the north facing glades and up onto the easterly facing snowfield that is just left of the drainage that heads down to Sluice Way. Take the snowfield fall line and aim just left of the mid sized pine tree that marks lower right of the snowfield. Pass the tree on the left and proceed out onto the prow which is another 75 feet or so.
The route is directly fall line. There are likely a lot of options when the snow is good, but half way down, typically you’ll wrap left around a protruding rock and back underneath it. From here, continue fall line, carefully down onto the granite slabs and then the apron below. Be aware of crusty snow on this route and especially in the run out.

Difficulty: 8
Pitch: 50+ degrees
Fun Factor: **

TF 14: Sierra Gold: This run looks deceptively easy, probably because it is lined with some beautiful, old growth trees. But this is no Red Dog Ridge. The hefty pitch combined with these trees are what make it special, while the exit is what makes it difficult. This is an excellent run worth putting on the tick list and you’ll have to keep your eye on it closely to monitor the snow and coverage on the lower section.

To get there, follow the directions to Hope, but stay slightly left. Use the notable drainage between this line and Granite Tier Drops as a marker, which you’ll always keep just to your left. Once you enter the trees, get ready for some amazing turns that will sluff as you go. If you’re ahead of your sluff, be aware that it’ll be charging right at you when you enter the more difficult section below. There are several exits and which one you take will most likely depend on snow coverage. On the lower right, there is a small cliff (which can be unnerving in bad conditions or low light) that lands on the steep slabs that form the run out of Hope. Or you can head fall line or slightly left through some tricky spines and undulating terrain. The snow conditions can change dramatically down here, so know the snow before you go and be a hero. My brother, Scott, once had sensational conditions for the entire line, until the lower pitch, where the crust caused him to tomahawk out onto the apron. The next day he started wearing a helmet for the rest of his life.

Difficulty: 7
Pitch: 30-50+ degrees
Fun Factor: ****
**TF 15: Granite Tier Drops:** This is Tram Face’s gift to the cliff jumper in you. Situated on a somewhat more gradual pitch, this line tends to instill confidence and is very fun. It is made up of 4 or more moderate sized drops that in higher snow levels can become simple steep rollovers that allow for snow contact the entire run. A select few people have sent the bottom cliff huge, through the goal post trees. However, to preserve your joints, you’ll probably want to skirt that cliff to the rider’s right, which offers a short, scenic ramp and a couple small, fun drops.

The start is just rider’s left of the notable drainage that forms the left boundary of Sierra Gold. Head fall line down the gentle snowfield to the roll over, which is the first drop. While it’s generally self explanatory from there, make sure you’ve already scouted out the cliffs and the quality of the landings. Keep in mind, this face gets a lot of sun, so it might not be as soft as you expect.

- **Difficulty:** 5
- **Pitch:** 40 degrees
- **Fun Factor:** ****

**TF 16: Moonbeam:** When covered well, this line can be a fun and relatively gentle, but exciting rib skiing experience. Situated to the right and alongside the prominent gully, Locals Night Out, Moonbeam provides a moderately exposed riding experience.

Starting just rider’s right of Local’s, head out to the notable prow. The line heads fall line and over the roll. Down low, there is a little route finding to avoid the bumpy granite.

- **Difficulty:** 3
- **Pitch:** 40-45 degrees.
- **Fun Factor:** **

**TF 17: Local’s Night Out:**

Many mornings after a beautiful full moon, and when the snow is good on the face, you’ll drive into the valley and see a bunch of tracks fanning out of the bottom of this classic. If anything, these tracks highlight what local folk love to do when the skies are cold, the snow is crystalline, and the moon is shining brightly. Being out in the open air is what locals love about the mountains, and hitting this run in the middle of the night is one of the many

*Even little locals enjoy this one. Due to a heavy winter in 2011, it lasted into June.*
ways they connect with the elements. Local’s Night Out is one of the most traveled routes on Tram Face, but this does not mean avoid it. It’s a classic for a reason.

While this is one of the easier runs on Tram Face, do not get complacent. Avalanches fire through this thing and tend to grab more snow on the apron before pummeling their way down to the flats. Some notable skiers have gone for rides here.

Up top, spend some time and take in the massive pines that mark its entrance. Then slide on in for a full, fall line shot straight to the bottom. If the left wall is crusty, try the right side which tends to remain better protected. Navigate a few small cliffs on the upper apron and then open it up all the way into Shirley Canyon.

**Difficulty:** 2
**Pitch:** 35 - 38 degrees
**Fun Factor:** ****

TF 18: *Lost Soul*: This is a worthwhile line if you enjoy the experience of a good start. But be ready when the rug gets pulled out from underneath you. The upper face is broad and respectable, while the foundation down low is rocky and broken, leaving you wondering, ‘where am I?’ With respect to avalanches, the upper face is where a lot of weight gets piled on, and it has been known to rip huge ones when unduly stressed.

The line is generally self explanatory. The upper face is a great place for broad turns for talented GS riders. Half way down, be sure to reign it in a little when you pass the trees because navigation becomes key through the upcoming and sometimes hidden rock mines, which exist in most snow levels.

**Difficulty:** 4
**Pitch:** 40-43 degrees
**Fun Factor:** **
TF 19: *Mother Teresa:* This is one of the feel good runs on the rider’s left side of Tram Face and it’s worth casting your stone in here at least once. Many refer to it as a “hero” route. Probably what feels best about it is that halfway down you can shout up and help your friends find their way through the bottom of Lost Soul. Without a doubt, you’ll ski away feeling - or at least appearing - like you’re a great person doing the right thing.

Remember that the pitch on the upper face is prime for starting avalanches. Go fall line on the upper portion and then when you reach the little tree and rocks on your right, gently curve right for a turn or two and then follow the fall line all the way out.

- **Difficulty:** 3
- **Pitch:** 38 degrees
- **Fun Factor:** ***

TF 20: *Show Me the Money:* Fortunately, when you get lost on this line, which is situated about half way between Mother Teresa and Disingenuous, you can always search out the Grounding Tree. We all get drawn down paths that we think will lead to our own survival. But when these paths get shallow, you might find yourself needing a little detour to feel better. Three fourths of the way down, pull in just below the rocks on the right and hang out by the rather large and beautiful tree. This will help settle you in the midst of what can be some confusing terrain, and figuratively, you’ll be on your way back to the top.

- **Difficulty:** 2
- **Pitch:** 25-30 degrees
- **Fun Factor:** **

TF 21: *Twilight Zone:* This is a steeper way down into Disingenuous. Its shady slopes typically hold the snow, but the fun is short lived. With rocks bordering the right side part way down, you and your community of friends might feel that escape up and out to higher ground is not necessarily in your control. Just a reminder - slopes with this pitch slide.

- **Difficulty:** 2
- **Pitch:** 35-40 degrees
- **Fun Factor:** *

TF 22: *Disingenuous:* This line is named after that friend who tells you how awesome it is. But then you get there and find out he was just pulling your chain. Situated far rider’s left on the face, this is a short, but broad one, that can surprise takers with its shifty snow conditions. Even when it appears harmless, remain vigilant and don’t get complacent.

- **Difficulty:** 1
- **Pitch:** 30 degrees
- **Fun Factor:** *

TF 23: *Lazy River Ridge:* If you’re looking for a Tram Face experience but you’re not quite ready for the real deal, just hop on the Lazy River. It kind of makes you feel like you’re on the face while you’re actually bypassing it altogether. There’s really not much danger here, except
for when you’re back at the bar that night and your friends ask where you skied today. But the warmth and safety that the Lazy River provides will help you overcome any uneasy feelings that result from having taken it.

Follow the ridge line down to the very end where it drops into Shirley Canyon. Be aware that the final exit off the ridge can be a bit tricky and slippery, and that many people have fallen here. Once in Shirley canyon, wrap back around and find The Spirit Trail, which helps you reconnect to the natural path. The path stays left, well away from the potential avalanche run outs that come down from the steeper lines higher on the face.

**Difficulty:** 1
**Pitch:** 20 degrees
**Fun Factor:** 🌉

**TF 24: The Spirit Trail:** Use the spirit trail to find your way back to where you came from and to gain a different perspective. Things always look different from below than they do from the top or from the middle. As with the many spirit trails running through Squaw Valley and the adjacent mountains, it’s worth taking it slow, as it’ll open up your eyes to all kinds of amazing things around you.

**Pitch:** 0-10 degrees
**Difficulty:** 🌟
**Fun Factor:** *****

“That was the best run I ever had!”
Be good to one another. Stand up for your community. Learn how to approach the mountains responsibly and respectfully so you can enjoy a full life with them. Be patient and the right time will come. Enjoy it out there!

- Robb