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“Il Cavaliere” Silvio Mondinelli back to Everest north side – with Abele Blanc

Italian Silvio “Gnaro” Mondinelli completed his 14x8000ers quest in 2007. Following 14 years of struggle and too many lost friends, he became the lucky 13th to accomplish the challenge.

“I think it’s going to take a long time before I find a good enough reason to leave my family for Himalaya again,” he told media afterwards. “However, a wolf might lose his hair, but not his call,” he cautioned.

The wolf’s comeback

One year later Gnaro assembled a weather station on Everest South Col. And a few months back, Silvio could resist no more. A new route on Gasherbrum I north side is in the works, with an Everest encore thrown in.

“It’s good training for GI – and, I confess I like the thought of having climbed Everest without O2 from both sides,” Silvio (51) told Montagna.org.

As for the north side of the peak, this is Mondinelli’s third attempt there. In 1999 and 2000 Silvio ended up helping other climbers down, sans summit for himself.

Just retired after 33 years as a mountain ranger in the Monte Rossa massif, it was Gnaro’s rescue work that granted him the title of Cavaliere de la repubblica Italiana (Knight of the Italian republic).

Abele

Silvio is returning to the roof of the world with long-time partner and friend Abele Blanc (56), one of the most outstanding 8000er climbers in Italy. They both share difficult memories from Annapurna, where Abele lost his regular climbing partner Christian Kuntner.

The year was 2005, the accident took place shortly after Ed Viesturs’s final summit. Gnaro was on his second summit push when somewhere between camp 2 and camp 3, a big serac broke off. On their ultimate mountain, the falling ice went straight for Christian Kuntner and Abele Blanc. Abele was injured; Christian died of inner hemorrhages in Silvio’s arms.

The great Himalayan saga of the quiet ace climbing brothers Abele Blanc and Christian Kuntner was over. Abele broke down and Gnaro’s motivation for an Annapurna summit vanished, until 2006 when he summited the peak at last.

According to Montagna.org, rumor is that Abele, with 13 8000ers under his belt, might give a sixth (!) shot to Annapurna right after Everest. The news is unconfirmed however – Blanc is usually media shy.

On Everest, Gnaro and Abele will be joined by Marco Camandona and Michele Enzo. The team will set off from Italy on March 30th.

Marco Camandona summited Cho Oyu, Manaslu and K2 (with Blanc in 2000). Michele Enzo, born in 1974, summited Shisha Main with Mondinelli in 2006 – the two men then worked together at Everest south Col with the scientific EvK2Cnr project in 2008. Michele launched a summit bid, reaching 8,600m w/o O2 before high winds forced him back.

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