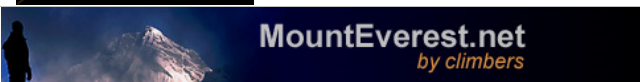




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ExWeb special: Himalaya fall season kick-off with a huge spring flashback



ExplorersWeb file image of climber high above the clouds reflecting on his recent Everest summit.

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Verhoeve (HOL) in June. Between these two sad boundaries, there were new routes and interesting stories.

550 summits total in spring 2009, Everest passed 4.500; problems with fore summits on Dhaula and Manaslu

The season on the most visible and coveted 8000er – Everest – started with the summits of 5 May and faded with the last summit wave on 23 May (a late summit bid in June was not successful). More or less the same summit dates of previous Springs: 2006 (30.04 to 26.05); 2007 (30.04 to 16.06); and 2008 (07.05 to 28.05).

Besides Everest, with huge crowds on the regular route, the season had plenty of action on Manaslu, Dhaulagiri, Lhotse and Kangchenjunga.

Again, problems with fore summits emerged on Dhaulagiri and, mainly, Manaslu. Several "summits" are being disputed and the peak is becoming the most problematic 8000er to compile these days in terms of who went to the real summit and who stopped halfway.

We had more than 550 summits on all 8000ers during this season. Makalu has passed the 300-ascents mark. Lhotse and Dhaulagiri have more than 400 ascents each. So does Manaslu, in theory; excluding the "fore summits" of the past few years it has less. Everest passed 4.500 ascents.

Return of the big boys

A significant thing with the season was the return of the big shots. Several climbers with all 8000ers returned to Himalaya.

Alberto Iñurrategi came for the West Pillar of Makalu. Juanito Oiarzabal went for his 23th 8000er on Kangchenjunga. Ed Viesturs showed up for his 7th summit on Everest.

Sergio Martini now summited Everest from both sides. Park Young-Seok drew a new line on the SW Face of Everest. And Gnaro Mondinelli came for an environmental/meteorological project ("EvK2Cnr").

No supplementary oxygen on Everest still a tough quest

In 2009 several climbers announced their intention to scale Everest without bottled oxygen. The great Ed Viesturs would try NOOX: "It was my first goal and my desire to attempt my 7th Everest summit without supplementary oxygen". But with less than ideal conditions - too windy, too cold and traffic jams on the route - he opted to use oxygen.

Three climbers summited NOOX this season, but with tragic consequences. Frank Ziebarth (GER) on 21 May, did not make it back. Jarle Traa (NOR) on 22 May, mobilized a rescue

10:45 am CDT Aug 24, 2009

(MountEverest.net) Charging head over heels into the Pakistan summer season we never really wrapped the spring in Nepal.

With a brand new fall list of expeditions in the works for this week (pls email us if you're going), let's take a look at where we left off last.

Here goes an extensive spring 2009 Everest & Himalaya climbing end report compiled by Rodrigo Granzotto Peron.

Everest & Himalaya spring 2009 Season's end Chronicle by Rodrigo Granzotto Peron

1 – GENERAL OVERVIEW OF THE SEASON

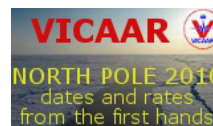
Turmoil and manifestations connected to the 50th anniversary of Dalai Lama's exile once again threw Beijing into erratic behavior, with its authorities issuing diffuse rules for mountaineers.

Granting permit to some, refusing others; the procedure forced change of plans for climbers such as Andrew Lock who gave up his attempt to scale Everest and Shisha Pangma. The mess led several climbers to the supercrowded Nepali Flank and even north side regulars, like Himex, went south this year.

The season started in tears, with the death of Piotr Morawski (POL) in early April, and ended in melancholy, with the death of Dennis



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operation to bring him down safely. The same happened to Mike Farris (USA) on 23 May, with several sherpas helping him reach BC.

Seniors

Climbing legend Nikolay Cherny (RUS) summited Everest at age 70, the oldest Russian to top out.

Media legend Ranulph Fiennes (UK) also summited the highest of all mountains and at 65 was touted the oldest person to complete the Three Poles. (Ed. Note from AdventureStats/Poles: Fiennes did the North Pole on snow mobile with undisclosed number of resupplies; and the South Pole in two traverses - one with parasail and one on snowmobile).

Some other significant aspects of the Season are below, each in a specific topic:

2 – WOMEN IN TIGHT RACE

I – The Three Sopranos

Edurne Pasaban (SPA) summited Kangchenjunga and was the first lady climber to have 12 different 8000ers. On descent things became very rough and a debilitated Edurne needed support of her mates from Al Filo de Lo Imposible. She recovered with medical oxygen.

In the same place and at the same time, Nives Meroi (ITA) had to give up summit to help husband Romano Benet (ITA). He developed HACE-principle and passed very difficult moments on the descent. As a result, Nives ended the Spring Season still with 11, 8000ers.

Some days later, Gerlinde Kaltenbrunner (AUT), also summited her 12th 8000er – Lhotse – accompanied by husband Ralf Dujmovits (GER). She reached the same level of Edurne, head to head in the final stages of the quest to become the first lady to summit all 8000ers. (I would like to use this space to apologize to Gerlinde for noting early in the season a wrong lead passed to me that she would try a double-header in Khumbu).

II – New Faces from Asia

Is it a plane? Is it a train? No, it's Super-Oh Eun Sun, collecting 8000ers faster than the jet wind.

Nick named "squirrel" and "iron woman", Oh Eun-Sun started out in Karakoram in 1997, where she achieved her first 8000er (G2). She later tried Makalu, Broad Peak and K2 without success until her second 8000er summit came on Everest in 2004.

She really sped up after that, summiting Shisha in 2006, Cho Oyu & K2 in 2007, Makalu, Lhotse, Broad Peak and Manaslu in 2008 and now latest Kangchenjunga and Dhaulagiri. She broke some records on Kangchen:

- a) first female from S Korea and third lady ever to summit KG;
- b) First woman to conquer the TOP 3 (EV + K2 + KG) and the TOP 5 (EV + K2 + KG + LH + MK);
- c) Fourth woman, after Gerlinde, Nives and Edurne, to summit 10 different 8000ers.

Also Go Mi-Sun (Go Mi-Young) shook up the structures of high altitude mountaineering. A former champion of the Asian X-Games, she summited her first 8000er very recently (CH in 2006). Since then she has stood on the summit of EV, BP & SH in 2007, LH, K2 & MN in 2008, and now MK, KG and DH. All the conquests were accompanied by Kim Jae-Soo. Go & Kim are the first climbers to summit 3 different 8000ers in three consecutive years; and the last 9 mountains they topped out in just 48 months. Sadly, we lost Go Mi-Sun in the Summer season, a terrible loss.

Oh & Go became known and respected in recent years. To understand these two ladies' appetite for 8000ers, let's rewind a little bit.

By the end of 2006, Nives and Gerlinde had 9x8000ers, Edurne 8, Oh only 3 and Go just 1.

End of 2007, Nives and Gerlinde had 10x8000ers, Edurne 9, Oh 5 and Go 4.

The Three Sopranos ended 2008 even with 11, while Eun-Sun had jumped to 9 and Mi-Sun to 7.

During this time frame, Edurne had summited 3, Nives and Gerlinde 2, while Oh and Go had topped out 6 each. A rocket-fast collection.

Oh Eun-Sun told Chosun newspaper in March this year: "Since there is no woman in the world who has climbed all 14 summits, I hope I will be the first." After a recent double-header in Pakistan (NP + G1), she is a serious contender for the position.

III – Other Female Collectors

With several absences, only Kinga Baranowska (POL), now with 6, 8000ers, and Anita Ugyan (HUN), now with 4, made waves. Alix von Melle (GER) and Ellen Miller (USA) both summited their 3rd 8000er. After a great performance in Karakoram last year, Elisabeth Revol (FRA) made a serious attempt on the difficult East Ridge of Annapurna. Going as far as Annapurna East (8.051m); she is the first woman to summit AN E.

IV – Situation of Lady Collectors by the end of Spring season

- 12 Edurne Pasaban (SPA)
- 12 Gerlinde Kaltenbrunner (AUT)
- 11 Nives Meroi (ITA)
- 11 Oh Eun-Sun (S-K)
- 10 Go Mi-Sun (S-K)
- 06 Anna Czerwinska (POL)
- 06 Kinga Baranowska (POL)
- 04 Badia Bonilla Luna (MEX)
- 04 Rosa Maria Fernandez (SPA)

04 Joelle Brupbacher (SWZ)
04 Anita Ugyan (HUN)

3 – FIVE TREASURES ON THE EASTERN BORDER

Kangchenjunga became a very important stage in 2009, with triumph, drama, records broken and several important roles played on its slopes.

Samuel Johnson once said that "great works are performed by perseverance". Perseverance is exactly what drives Juanito Oiarzabal (SPA) to surpass obstacles and keep climbing higher and higher over the years. This spring, the famous Basque summited KG for a second time, and maintained his leadership as the climber with most 8000ers, now 23.

Juanito Oiarzabal is the first person to conquer the TOP 3 (EV + K2 + KG) twice, and also the oldest climber to summit KG, at almost 53.

The most masculine 8000er, KG got a feminine touch in 2009. Until the beginning of the season, only two women – Ginette Harrison (UK), in 1998, and Gerlinde Kaltenbrunner (AUT), in 2006 – had summited this difficult and remote mountain on the Eastern Border of Nepal.

With 219 ascents until 2008, women represented only 0,9% of the summits registered. But in 2009, after successful ascents by Oh Eun-Sun, Edurne Pasaban, Kinga Baranowska and Go Mi-Sun, women now represent almost 2,5% of the ascents.

4 – NEW ADMISSIONS IN A PRIVATE CLUB

Denis Urubko (KAZ) is one of the most respected and talented climbers of our time. He was not a sudden star - instead little by little he began shining brighter and brighter.

Urubko became the 15th person to summit all 8000ers (the 8th to do it without oxygen), and ended his quest with three new routes (BP, MN and CH), one winter first (MK), and the fastest ascent ever of an 8000er (G2 in just 7h30m in 2001).

Very few climbers can take pride in such realizations. With a new and dangerous route on the treacherous SE Face of Cho Oyu accomplished with Boris Dedeshko (KAZ), Urubko's entrance to the exclusive club came in great style, a masterpiece from a master.

Ralf Dujmovits (GER) also joined the club after his summit on Lhotse. Respected as climber and entrepreneur (Amical has performed successful expeditions on almost all 8000ers), he finally conquered LH (after returning without summit last year), thus becoming the 16th person to summit all 8000ers, following almost two decades of journey among them.

5 – COLLECTORS WITH AT LEAST ONE SUMMIT IN SPRING

14 Denis Urubko (KAZ)
14 Ralf Dujmovits (GER)
12 Edurne Pasaban (SPA)
12 Gerlinde Kaltenbrunner (AUT)
12 Hirotaka Takeuchi (JAP)
12 João Garcia (POR)
11 Oh Eun-Sun (S-K)
11 Serap Jangbu Sherpa (NEP)
10 Mario Panzeri (ITA)
10 Go Mi-Sun (S-K)
10 Kim Jae-Soo (S-K)
09 Radek Jaros (CZE)
08 Kim Chang-Ho (S-K)
08 Zsolt Eross (HUN)
07 Alberto Zerain (SPA)
07 Alexey Bolotov (RUS)
06 Alex Txikón (SPA)
06 Chering Norbu Bodh (IND)
06 Dawa Chhiri I Sherpa (NEP)
06 Ferrán Latorre (SPA)
06 Gleb Sokolov (RUS)
06 Juanjo Garra (SPA)
06 Kim Mi-Gon (S-K)
06 Kinga Baranowska (POL)
06 Tshering Dorje II Sherpa (NEP)
05 Keith Kerr (USA)
05 Kim Hong-Bin (S-K)
05 Lhakpa Dorje III Sherpa (NEP)
05 Pasang Lama Bhote (NEP)

Note: the complete list with all collectors will be released by the end of the Karakoram season, in a special report, updated to the end of Summer.

6 – OBITUARY (or TOO MANY TEARS IN ONE SEASON)

07.04 Piotr Morawski (POL, 32) [DH, crevasse]
20.04 Martin Minarik (CZE, 41) [AN, congelation]
28.04 Giuseppe Antonelli (ITA, 38) [MN, HAPE]
01.05 Mehdi Etemadfar (IRA, 52) [DH, fall]
06.05 Lhakpa Nuru Sherpa (NEP, 32) [EV, avalanche]
12.05 Kaji Sherpa (NEP, 45) [EV, poisoned by methanol]
19.05 Levente Szabo (HUN, 39) [MN, fall]
19.05 Wu Weng-Hong (CHIN, 40) [EV, HAPE]
21.05 Veslav Chzaszcz (CZE, 47) [EV, fall]
21.05 Frank Ziebarth (GER, 29) [EV, AMS and congelation]
27.05 Serguey Samoilov (RUS, 50) [LH, fall]
02.06 Dennis Verhoeve (HOL, 52) [CH, fall]
09.06 Mick Parker (AUS, 36) [found dead in Kathmandu]

Four climbers perished on EV; 2 on MN and DH; 1 on AN, CH and LH; 2 in other circumstances.

Total: 13. Too many fatalities for a season. We also had a large number of frostbites this year.

7 – SERIAL REPEATERS ON EVEREST

I – Sherpas

19 Apa
 16 Chuwang Nima
 15 Phurba Tashi
 14 Nima Gombu
 13 Kami Rita (Topke)
 13 Chuldim Ang Dorje
 12 Lhakpa Rita
 11 Danuru
 11 Dorje Sonam Gyalzen
 11 Tshering Dorje I
 10 Nima Nuru II
 09 Ang Chhiring
 09 Karsang Namgyal
 09 Kame
 09 Panuru
 08 Son Dorje
 08 Mingma Chhiri
 07 Da Jangbu
 07 Dawa Nuru II
 07 Pasang Tenzing
 07 Thukten Dorje

II – Western

11 Dave Hahn (USA)
 09 Willie Benegas (USA)
 07 Ed Viesturs (USA)
 07 Kenton Cool (UK)
 06 Dean Staples (N-Z)
 06 Mark Whetu (N-Z)
 06 Mark Woodward (N-Z)
 05 Kari Kobler (SWZ)
 04 Charles Scott Woolums (UK)
 04 David Hamilton (UK)
 03 Alex Abramov (RUS)
 03 David Tait (UK)
 03 Hiroyuki Kuraoka (JAP)
 03 Jake Norton (USA)
 03 Justin Reese Merle (USA)
 03 Park Young-Seok (S-K)
 03 Phil Crampton (UK)
 03 Yuri Contreras Cedi (MEX)

III – And other peaks?

Lhakpa Tshering II Sherpa summited MN for the second time, but his summit is disputed (only fore summit). Also Keshap Gurung has the same problem, but his two summits are disputed (2008 and 2009). Chewang Lendu summited LH twice this season, and now has 3 summits, only after Palden Namgye. On MK, sherpas Dorchi and Lhakpa Wangal summited for the second time. On KG, Dawa Wangchuk Sherpa summited for the fourth time.

8 – FIRSTS & RECORD-BREAKERS

I – Everest

First astronaut – Scott Edward Parazynski (USA)
 First Argentinean lady – Mercedes Sahores
 First Bulgarian lady – Petya Stanimirova Kolcheva
 First Climber with multiple sclerosis (MS) – Lori Schneider (USA)
 First Croatian lady – Darija Bostjancic and Iris Bostjancic (sisters)
 First Hungarian lady – Anita Ugyan
 First Moldavian – Andrey Carpenco
 First Panamanian – Michael Morales
 First Singaporean lady – Lee Li-Hui, Esther Tan and Jane Lee
 First Taiwanese Aboriginal Climber – Wu Yu-Lung

II – Kangchenjunga

First Norwegian – Jon Gangdal
 First Polish lady – Kinga Baranowska
 First South Korean lady – Oh Eun-Sun
 First Spanish lady – Edurne Pasaban
 First Swedish – Mattias Karlsson
 First lady to summit TOP 5 – Oh Eun-Sun

III – Lhotse

First Austrian lady – Gerlinde Kaltenbrunner
 First Irish – Domhnall Dochartaigh
 First Swiss lady – Josette Vallotton

IV – Makalu

First Swedish – Hans Fredrik Strang and Niklas Hallstrom
 First Nepali to summit TOP 5 – Serap Jangbu Sherpa

V – Dhaulagiri

First Indian – Chering Norbu Bodh, Prabhu Dayal, Rinzin Dorje, Sonam Targais, Kesang Rangdol

First German lady – Alix von Melle, Helga Soll and Alexandra Robl

First South Korean lady – Oh Eun-Sun

First Turkish – Tunç Findik

VI – Manaslu

First Hungarian – Zsolt Eross and Daniel Barna

First Portuguese – João Garcia

VII – First hat trick in Himalaya

South Korean top climbers Go Mi-Sun and Kim Jae-Soo teamed-up to summit three 8000ers in Himalaya (Ed note: not part of Karakoram) this season. Starting with Makalu (April 30), they proceeded to Kangchenjunga (May 19) and summited Dhaulagiri (June 9) in the first hat trick ever in Nepal (triple-headers are quite common in Karakoram, but not in Himalaya).

They had summited 10, 8000ers each and completed TOP 3 and TOP 5 respectively.

VIII – Some doubts during the season

a) Who is the oldest person from USA to summit EV?

Two summiteers from United States – E Dawes Eddy III and Bill Burke, both 67 – disputed the title of “oldest American”. One of them announced he was the oldest. Someone however alerted that Nils Antezana, Bolivian born, but USA citizen, summited EV at 69 years old.

Then things got a little weird, with some voices trying to force a “first” at any cost. Someone suggested “oldest American to summit and come back alive” (Antezana died on descent). Another came with “oldest American-born” (because Antezana is Bolivian-born). However, Nils Antezana is still the oldest American to summit Everest.

b) Who is the youngest climber from USA to summit EV?

Two seventeen years old boys from North America – John Collison and Johnny Strange – summited EV in May. John Collison, born 29.03.1992, is the youngest American ever to top EV, at 17 years, a month and 20 days old, beating Samantha Larson’s previous record.

c) Who are the first sisters to summit EV together?

Two Croatian sisters – Darija & Iris Bostjancic – summited Everest together on May 19. First it was announced they were the first sisters to summit together. However, they are not. Previous to them, Lakpa Sherpani and her younger sister Mingkpa Sherpani summited together in 2003.

9 – 20K POTENTIAL

The first climber to reach 8000er summits 20 times was Juanito Oiarzabal (SPA). He now has 23, the actual world record. So far, Juanito has repeated EV, K2, KG, MK, CH, G1 and G2. With seven down already, Juanito has announced plans to be the first climber to summit all 14, 8000ers twice.

The second climber to summit 20x8000ers was Ed Viesturs (USA), on Annapurna, 2005. After some years of absence, he came back this year as part of the expedition organized by First Ascent. With 7 summits on Everest, Ed now has 21 main 8000ers.

Two sherpas also broke the 20k barrier this year. Danuru, one of the most respected climbing sherpas, working for IMG, topped EV for the 11th time (his 20th 8000er). Phurba Tashi, guide for Himex, went to the summit of EV twice, and also got his 20th main 8000er. Several other sherpas have between 15 and 19.

10 – SKIING DOWN DHAULAGIRI

David Fojtik (CZE) did the most complete ski descent yet of DH, skiing down its N Face from top to 7300m and from 6700m to BC. The previous DH ski descents (in 1996, 1997 and 2007) were less complete. David Fojtik is also the second Czech to ski down an 8000er, after Vladimir Smrz (in 2000).

11 – NANDA DEVI

One of the most notorious 7000ers, Nanda Devi is a double summit mountain, with a lower (7434m) and a higher (7816m) peak. Nanda Devi East, last summited more than a decade ago, was the target of two different expeditions this season.

The first was a Polish party, under leadership of Jan Lenczowski, to celebrate the “70th anniversary of Polish Himalayan mountaineering” (in 1939 Jakub Bujak, Janusz Klarner, Adam Karpinski and Stefan Bernardzikiewicz made the first ascent of ND East). The climate was extreme all along the expedition. The last attempt, between May 25 and 27, performed by Jarek Wocko and Daniel Cieszynski, was unsuccessful and the expedition was called off.

The second was an attempt to open a new route – S Ridge – on the austral flank of Nanda Devi East, by a British party with Martin Moran, Robert (Rob) Jarvis, Paul Guest, Leon Winchester and Indian climber Luder Sain. They gave up, because “the South Ridge proved too big an objective for our team and we switched our attention to a smaller but striking and unclimbed peak near base camp, Changuch (6322m)”.

12 – PARK-TASTIC

Quoting sociologist Max Weber, “Man would not have attained the possible unless time and again he had reached out of the impossible”.

Park Young Seok – the first S Korean to complete the 14x8000ers and the first person ever to finish the Adventure Grand Slam (all 8000ers + S Pole + N Pole) – made possible the impossible, opening a new route on the SW Face of Everest this season.

Park became obsessed with the SW Face at first sight. Immense and difficult, this flank of EV was challenged very few times, and had only two complete routes: right hand route (British Route, 1975) and left hand route (Soviet Route, 1982). Park saw the possibility of a new route, in the middle.

He attempted this line in 1991, 1993 and 2007, with no success and several big losses (three friends died on the attempts). But he came determined to tame this mammoth route in 2009 ("I will conquer the peak at any cost"). After some setbacks, Park finally got it, a tribute to his genius.

This is one of a sequence of great routes opened by South Koreans over the last decades, Makalu SE Face 1982; Annapurna S Face 1994; Shishapangma SW Face 2002 and now Everest SW Face 2009.

13 – FIRST ASCENTS ON LOWER PEAKS

I – Dome Kang (7264m)

Himalayan Database registers the first ascent of this peak as being done by G O Dyhrenfurth (GER), in 1930. But after deep research, Carlos Soria (SPA) managed to find that Dyhrenfurth in fact scaled a nearby peak and Dome Kang was still virgin terrain. After two unsuccessful previous expeditions, in 2009 Soria finally got it, in company of Vicente "Tente" Lagunilla (SPA) and three sherpas.

An incredible tribute to Soria's untamed adventure spirit, in the year he turned 70.

II – Jobo Rinjang (6778m)

With almost all action on 8000ers these days, it's very good to see that 6000ers and 7000ers still have appeal to some climbers. North-American duo David Gottlieb and Joe Puryer are always seeking for new, virgin peaks to challenge.

Last year they made the first absolute ascent of Kang Nachugo (6735m). This year they added Jobo Rinjang (6778m), a beautiful peak near Tarnga, which they climbed by the S Face (Direct Route).

III – Peak 6206 (6206m)

Alexander Ruchkin (RUS) and Mikhail Mikhailov (RUS) made the first ascent of Peak 6206, in Sichuan, part of the Minya Konka massif, in preparation for the final goal of the expedition: a first ascent of Mt Edgar, or E-Gongga (6618m).

Early June, an avalanche on E-Gongga took the lives of three American climbers (Jonny Copp, Wade Johnson and Micah Dash).

IV – Changuch (6322m)

Changuch is an 6000er near Nanda Devi and Nanda Kot, in the Uttarakhand district of India. Previous attempts – 1987, 1997 and 2007 – failed, but this year British climbers Robert (Rob) Jarvis, Paul Guest, Martin Moran, Leon Winchester, with Indian liaison officer Luder Sain were successful on the North West Ridge, reaching summit on June 9th.

14 – NEW ROUTES

Besides Park Young-Seok's new SW Face route on EV, we had:

I – Cho Oyu (SE Face – Direct Route)

Denis Urubko's plan for a speed ascent of Cho Oyu, the grand finale in his quest for all 8000ers, was shot by the Chinese authorities, forcing him to find another way up his last mountain. The only possibility was the difficult and dangerous Nepali Flank.

This flank is divided in the SW Face and the SE Face, where "the avalanche danger is exceptional" (Reinhold Messner). Together with Boris Dedeshko, Denis chose a direct line on the SE Face, conquering his last 8000er with flying colors.

The Kazakhs have forged countless great new routes on Himalaya over the years, such as Everest SW Face 1982 (with the Russians); Kangchenjunga Traverse Route 1989 (with the Russians); Dhaulagiri W Face 1991; Broad Peak SW Face 2005; Manaslu NE Face 2006 and now Cho Oyu SE Face Direct 2009.

II – Annapurna South (SE Face – Direct Route)

Dodo Kopold's (SLK) primary target this season was the E Ridge of Annapurna I (8.091m). Due to unsafe snow conditions he left the expedition (with included Elisabeth Revol and Martin Minarik) and instead reportedly opened a new technical route in the middle of the SE Face of Annapurna Dakshin (7.219m).

Dodo seems to have no limits. He reportedly summited Annapurna South in a single-push, 40 hours, alpine style, totally solo, on a new route on virgin terrain. According to Climbing Magazine, "Kopold carried only a 40-meter 6mm rope, eight pitons, eight ice screws, 10 quickdraws, three energy bars, some dried meat, and a stove for water."

(Ed note: Dodo Kopold has however been target of several serious climbing disputes, some controversies including deaths of his climbing mates.)

15 – NEW FRONTIERS FOR COMMERCIAL EXPEDITIONS

After a terrible setback on Everest in 1996 with the death of two great leaders, commercial expeditions to 8000ers have increased in popularity in the present decade. Several factors contributed to this:

- a) more precise weather forecasts;
- b) more experienced guides;

- c) incredible structures with countless comforts to clients, making the climbing easier;
- d) intensive use of sherpas on the preparation of the route and helping clients on all stages of the climb.

These patterns were previously used primarily on EV and CH, but nowadays outfits are transporting them to almost all 8000ers. This expansion to new frontiers is reshaping high altitude mountaineering with summit waves on several peaks in recent years.

With success on KG this season by Adventure Consultants, all 8000ers – except for Annapurna – have been summited by commercial outfits, pushing the horizons to a new level.

16 – WHAT HAPPENED ON THE TRAVERSE?

For all you mystery buffs, the Kazakh attempt to traverse Lhotse & Everest was the most intriguing puzzle of the season.

Several talented climbers, such as Maxut Zhumayev, Vassili Pivtsov, Serguey Samoilov and Evgeny Shutov teamed up to accomplish the first complete traverse between LH and EV. This traverse was the dream of another great Kazakh, Anatoli Boukreev (who tried the traverse in 1997, with Simone Moro).

The first part of the adventure – a direct line on the W Face of LH – proved tricky. Plans were further frustrated when the monsoon came early and very strong winds started to blow. The last days of the expedition turned enigmatic.

First came a cryptical message from Maxut on 21 May: "It doesn't matter who summited and what he summited. We only need the team success. Somebody was already looking at himself as the winner..." It is almost impossible to decode this message, but someone suggested it would refer to Denis Urubko, who had completed the 14x8000ers shortly before.

Some days of silence followed, after which information came that the team was on a final summit bid. On May 26, the expedition was called off.

When we all thought it was over, sad news arrived that one of the most important Kazakh climbers in recent years, Serguey Samoilov had lost his life on the white slopes of Lhotse. It is yet to be known what really happened and what went wrong.

17 – ABSOLUTE NUMBERS

Number of ascents on the 8000ers during the season:

Everest 406
Kangchenjunga 25
Lhotse 28
Makalu 27
Cho Oyu 16
Dhaulagiri 39
Manaslu 15
Annapurna 0
Shishapangma 0

TOTAL 556

**This Chronicle is based on preliminary data and under analysis. Some numbers will be revisited in the following months, with possibly a few corrections to be done by then.*

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