

15TH MAY - SUMMIT DAY THE BIGGEST EVENT IN MY LIFE!!!

I GREW MORE AND MORE NERVOUS ABOUT THE WIND AND IM AFRAID I WAS A LITTLE LATE IN GETTING READY, ONLY 25 MINS THOUGH AS I WAS PUTTING TONS OF HAND WARMERS AND FOOT WARMERS ON, GIVEN HOW PRONE I AM TO FROSTBITE...FINALLY I HAD MY DOWN SUIT ON AND HEADED OUT INTO THE WINDS TO FIND ANDRONICO AND MISAIL HAD GONE AHEAD AND KIKO WAS A LITTLE IRRATED WITH ME TO SAY THE LEAST. FINALLY I WAS IN MY CRAMPONS AND HEADED UP A VERY ICY CREVASSE RIDDEN SLOPE ON THE LONG 5 HOUR CLIMB UPTO THE BALCONY. I HAVE TO CONFESS I WAS LEFT ALONE FOR A BIT HERE AND GIVEN THAT IV ONLY BEEN CLIMBING 3 YEARS I COULDN'T FIND A PACE THAT I WAS HAPPY WITH AND I WAS VERY NERVOUS ABOUT ALL THE SPLITS IN THE ICE.. I LOST A GLOVE AS IT BLEW OFF AND I THOUGHT LONG AND HARD ABOUT TURNING BACK A FEW TIMES BUT EACH TIME THE THOUGHT OF GETTING MY FATHERS COMPANY HSBC'S FLAG TO THE SUMMIT AND THE EVE APPEAL FLAG (WHICH IS THE CHARITY I REPRESENT) I PUSHED ON. I SOON MANAGED TO GET CHULDEN ONE OF THE SHERPAS TO PACE ME AND I PRESSED ON UPWARDS INTO THE WINDY NIGHT UPTOWARDS THE BALCONY. AS WE WERE THE FIRST GROUPS TO GO THE SNOW WAS PRETTY DEEP WHICH MADE IT REALLY ARDUOUS AS YOUR FEET SUNK IN WITH EACH STEP. ALSO, EVERY TIME I THOUGHT ABOUT TURNING BACK I LOOKED AT THE LONG LINE OF FLASHLIGHTS BEHIND ME AND DIDNT FEEL LIKE EXPLAINING WHY I WAS TURNING BACK AT THIS EARLY STAGE TO EVERYONE, AFTERALL ITS REALLY A ONE SHOT MOUNTAIN AND THAT BORE HEAVILY ON MY MIND!! AT DAWN WE ARRIVED AT THE BALCONY AND TOOK A BREAK AND SWITCHED OXYGEN TANKS.. ON MY OXYGEN I WAS FASTIDIOUS TO THE POINT OF ANNOYANCE IM SURE ABOUT CHECKING THE GAUGE AND HOW MUCH TIME I HAD LEFT, ITS VERY IMPORTANT ONCE YOU ARE ON OXYGEN THAT YOU DONT COME OFF IT ONCE YOU ARE UP HIGH ON THE MOUNTAIN, THIS IS WHERE ALL THE ACCIDENTS HAPPEN. I THEN REALISED WE WERE QUITE A BIG GROUP ON THE BALCONY AND EVERYONE WAS HANGING AROUND WAITING AND THEN I REALISED WHY, I THINK EVERYONE EXPECTED OUR GROUP TO FIX THE ROPES WHICH RODRIGO HAD CATEGORICALLY EXPLAINED TO EVERYONE AT THE "ROPE FIXING MEETINGS" THAT WE WOULD ONLY PUT ROPES ON PLACES WHERE IT WAS ESSENTIAL, THE SOUTH SUMMIT, THE HILARY STEP AND THE SUMMIT RIDGE ( WE ALSO PLACED ALL THE ROPES ON THE YELLOW BAND WITH THE DISCOVERY TEAM. WE THEN JUST ROPED TOGETHER ALPINE STYLE AND SET UP TOWARDS THE SOUTH SUMMIT WHILST EVERYONE LOOKED REALLY ANNOYED OBVIOUSLY PRESUMING WE WOULD BE FIXING FOR EVERYONE I GUESS, BUT EACH EXPEDITION ESPECIALLY THOSE WHO ATTEMPT THE SUMMIT ON THE FIRST WEATHER WINDOW SHOULD BE PREPARED FOR MATTERS LIKE THIS AND RODRIGO AND PERTEMBA HAD TAKEN THE NECESSARY PRECAUTIONS FOR THAT. THE SOUTH SUMMIT WAS TOUGH AND I CRANKED MY OXYGEN UP A NOTCH TO GET ME UP THERE. CHULDEN AT THIS POINT HAD TURNED BACK AS HE KEPT FALLING ASLEEP ( HOPEFULLY FROM NOT PACING ME!!) AND I WAS NOW ROPED TO ERNESTO AS WE MADE OUR WAY UPWARDS.. I WAS NOW FULLY DETERMINED AT THIS POINT TO REACH THE TOP I THINK DAYLIGHT HELPS WITH ME, I REALLY HATE CLIMBING AT NIGHT.

I WAS NOW WITH ERNESTO AND NURU WHO HAD MY OXYGEN WHICH I WAS WATCHING LIKE A HAWK AND WHENEVER I COULDN'T SEE HIM I WOULD YELL AT HIM TO WAIT FOR ME!! I KNEW I WAS READY FOR A CHANGE SOMETIME SOON AND I HAD NO INTENTION OF RUNNING OUT. FINALLY WE REACHED THE SOUTH SUMMIT WHICH WAS AMAZING AND YOU REALLY FEEL LIKE YOU ARE GETTING CLOSE. I STOPPED AND SWITCHED OXYGEN TANKS AND

MADE A MENTAL NOT OF HOW LONG I HAD WITH THE NEW TANK AND WE HEADED TOWARDS THE HILARY STEP. ANDRONICO, MISAIL, KIKO AND PALDEN WERE A LITTLE BEHIND US. I GASPED WHEN I SAW THE HILARY STEP, NOT THAT ITS TECHNICALLY DIFFICULT BUT ITS IMPOSING AT THAT HEIGHT AND THERE ARE TWO BIG ROCKY CONES THAT YOU NEED TO NAVIGATE PRIOR TO ARRIVING ON THE LONG SUMMIT RIDGE. OUR SHERPAS TASHI AND LAKPA RITA FIXED THE ROPES ON THE HILARY STEP AND THE SUMMIT RIDGE AND SOON I WAS MAKING MY WAY TO THE HILARY STEP CAREFULLY JUMPING OVER ROCKS AND CREVASSES TO GET TO THE BOTTOM OF THE FIXED LINES AND DESPERATELY TRYING TO AVOID WALKING ANYWHERE NEAR THE TERRIFYING LOOKING CORNICED RIDGE THAT DROPS DOWN INTO THE KANGCHUNG FACE ( RODRIGOS ROUTE TO THE SUMMIT!) I WAS SOON UP THE HILARY STEP AND ERNESTO AND I WALKED TOWARDS THE SUMMIT AND I WAS ALREADY FIGHTING BACK THE TEARS AT THIS STAGE. WE ARRIVED ON THE SUMMIT AT AROUND 12.15PM ON 15TH MAY ( UNBEKNOWNST TO ME OUR TURN AROUND TIME WAS 12.00PM BUT AS THE WEATHER LOOKED OK RODRIGO LET US STAY UNTIL 2.30PM) WE ARRIVED ON THE SUMMIT AND THE DISCOVERY CAMERA WAS ON MY FACE AS THE TEARS STARTED, I WAS MEANT TO BE HOLDING THE HSBC FLAG WITH A BIG SMILE BUT I WAS A TEARY WRECK AS I HELD IT TO THE SKY. I HUGGED ALL THE SHERPAS TASHI AND NORU AS IT WAS A FIRST ASCENT FOR BOTH AND ALSO LAKPA RITA.. I SAID MY PRAYERS TO PETER VAN JENSENS LATE WIFE LORNE WHO IM WORKING ON THE EVE APPEAL FOR STILL CRYING. THE OTHERS THEN ARRIVED ON THE SUMMIT AND I PHOTOED THE ARRIVAL OF ANDRONICO, KIKO AND MISAIL AND THEN I HUGGED ANDRONICO, IT WAS SUCH A BIG AND EMOTIONAL MOMENT FOR BOTH OF US WHEN YOU ACHIEVE A DREAM LIKE THIS THAT YOU THINK IS UNACHIEVABLE. THERE WAS KENTON COOL ON THE SUMMIT ALSO AND HIS CLIENT AND I THINK AN IMG GUY. AT AROUND 2.00PM THE SHERPAS GOT ANTSY ABOUT GETTING DOWN AND THEN I HEARD RODRIGO OVER THE RADIO TELLING US TO GET OFF THE SUMMIT NOW AS THE WINDS WOULD BE PICKING UP SO I GRABBED LAKPA RITA AND ASKED HIM TO TAKE ME DOWN AS THE OTHERS WERE STILL FINISHING PHOTOS. I HAVE TO SAY I THINK I DID THE QUICKEST DESCENT IN HISTORY ( IM OBVIOUSLY EXAGERATING) AND I DONT KNOW HOW I RUSTELED UP THE ENERGY TO GET DOWN BUT LAKPA TOOK ME AT A PRETTY GOOD PACE WITH NURU RIGHT BEHIND ME..I GOT SOME MORE OXYGEN AT THE SOUTH SUMMIT, I LOST MY WATER BOTTLE DOWN THE HILARY STEP AND WE WERE SOON HEADING DOWN TOWARDS THE BALCONY ME ROPED INFRONT OF LAKPA. I LAST SAW THE GROUP ON THE HILARY STEP WHILST I WAS ON THE SOUTH SUMMIT AND THOUGHT THEY WERE PRETTY CLOSE BEHIND ME, LITTLE DID I KNOW WHAT DRAMA WOULD UNFOLD!! I CHATTED WITH KENTON ON THE ROCKY PATCH OF THE SOUTH SUMMIT AND HIS CLIENT LOOKED IN PRETTY BAD SHAPE I THINK HE WAS THROWING UP AT THIS POINT ( THIS MOUNTAIN IS REALLY TOUGH) AND THEN WE STOPPED AT THE BALCONY FOR A BRIEF REST AND THEN TASHI TOOK MY ROPE AND WE HEADED DOWN TO THE COL. I ARRIVED BACK AT CAMP AT AROUND 5.00PM HUGGED TASHI TO DEATH AND LOOKING EXTREMELY DISHEVELLED AND SHEEPISHLY OFF TO STAKE OUT A PLACE FOR THE BATHROOM I BUMPED INTO ANDREW LOCK WHO WAS GETTING READY FOR HIS SUMMIT ATTEMPT AND HE WANTED TO COME AND DO A POST SUMMIT INTERVIEW.. HE WAS COMING TO INTERVIEW ME IN MY TENT IN 2 MINS!! I HATE BEING CAUGHT SMELLING LIKE A POLE CAT AND HAVING JUST ARRIVED FROM A 17 HOUR EXERTION AND DEFINATELY WASNT FEELING OR LOOKING MY BEST.

ANDREW IS PRETTY CUTE SO I FLEW INTO MY TENT TO TRY AND LOOK A LITTLE BETTER BUT HE ARRIVED BEFORE I COULD DO A THING! DID A TEARY INTERVIEW WITH HIM AND WISHED

HIM LUCK ON HIS SUMMIT AND THEN WENT AND CHATTED TO THE GREEK TEAM WHO WERE DEPARTING FOR THE SUMMIT IN A FEW HOURS. I WISHED THEM LUCK AT BEING THE FIRST GREEKS ON THE SUMMIT AND THEY SAID THEY HAD SEEN MY TEAM THROUGH THEIR TELESCOPE ON THE SOUTH SUMMIT.. WHICH I ASSURED THEM COULD NOT BE POSSIBLE AS THEY WERE RIGHT BEHIND ME.

THE TEAM THAT I THOUGHT WAS MY TEAM WAS KENTON COOL AND HIS POOR CLIENT ARRIVING BACK DOWN, KENTON THEN INFORMED ME THAT MY TEAM WERE ON THE WAY DOWN VERY SLOWLY BUT SAFELY, SO RE ASSURED WITH THIS NEWS I WENT INTO MY TENT TO REST AND AWAIT THEIR ARRIVAL. AT AROUND 9.00PM I WOKE UP SUFFOCATING AND SCREAMED FRANTICALLY FOR CHULDEN AS I REALISED MY OXYGEN WAS GONE. HE NOTIFIED ME THAT WE HAD NO MORE LEFT AT WHICH POINT I WAS ALMOST HYSTERICAL.

HE THEN WENT AND GOT A BOTTLE FROM ANOTHER TEAM AND GAVE IT TO ME WHICH LIKE AN ADDICT I STUCK ONTO MY MOUTH WITH RELIEF. HE THEN POINTED OUT SOME LIGHTS AND NOTIFIED ME THAT IT WAS OUR TEAM COMING DOWN AND THEY WOULD BE AT THE SOUTH COL AROUND 10.30PM SO I RELAXED AND FELL ASLEEP. I HAD NO RADIO AS ERNESTO HAD TAKEN MINE SO I HAD NO CLUE WHERE THE TEAM WAS WHEN I WOKE UP AT 1.00AM AND REALISED THEY WERE STILL NOT BACK AT WHICH POINT I STARTED TO PANIC.. EVENTUALLY THEY ARRIVED AT 1.45AM AND I RUSHED OUT TO HELP ANDRONICO INTO HIS TENT AND GET HIM REHYDRATION SALTS.. SO WHAT HAPPENED FROM WHEN I SAW THEM ON THE HILARY STEP WENT SOMETHING LIKE THIS...

FROM DEPARTING THE SUMMIT ANDRONICO RAN OUT OF OXYGEN, THIS WAS MY BIG FEAR TO RUN OUT AT 29,000 FT..THERE WAS MORE OXYGEN AWAITING HIM ON THE SOUTH SUMMIT BUT HE HAD 40 MINS OR SO WITHOUT OXYGEN WHICH I THINK CAUSED HIM TO BE EXTREMELY TIRED. AT THE SOUTH SUMMIT HE HAD MORE OXYGEN GIVEN TO HIM AND THE GROUP CONTINUED DOWN THE MOUNTAIN VERY SLOWLY. AT THIS POINT KIKO, ERNESTO AND MISAIL WERE ALL OUT OF OXYGEN COMPLETELY AND WE HAD NO MORE OXYGEN STASHED AWAY UNTIL THE BALCONY BUT OBVIOUSLY WE HAD NO IDEA HOW LONG IT WOULD TAKE THEM TO GET THERE AND HOW LONG THEY WOULD ALL BE WITHOUT O'S PLUS THEY ALSO HAD VERY LITTLE WATER LEFT.. THERE WAS THEN A HUGE CONFUSION ABOUT WHERE THEY WERE ON THE MOUNTAIN AND AT WHAT TIME, BY NOW THEY WERE ALSO STARTING TO MEET ALL THE OTHER TEAMS GOING UP FOR THE SUMMIT WHICH CAUSED FURTHER DELAYS DUE TO THE ASCCENDER OR DESCENDER HAVING TO CLIP IN AND OUT OF THE FIXED ROPE. OUR POOR SHERPAS WHO HAD ALREADY RETURNED FROM THE SUMMIT WHERE THEN ASKED TO GO BACK UP THE MOUNTAIN TO MEET THE GROUP TAKING THEM WATER AND OXYGEN..THERE WAS A BIG MISUNDERSTANDING PROBABLY DUE TO THE FACT THAT HALF THE GROUP WERE HYPOTHERMIC, FROZEN ( THE WINDS WERE NOW BACK UP TO 50MPH) AND HYPOXIC ABOUT WHERE EXACTLY ON THE MOUNTAIN THEY WERE. THE SHERPAS COULDNT FIND THEM AND RADIO CALLS BETWEEN RODRIGO AND THE GROUP WERE FREQUENT AND CONFUSED. CHULDEN WAS THEN SENT BACK UP AS THE GROUP STILL HAD NOT RETURNED AT 12.00PM AND HE WENT WITH 3 BOTTLES OF WATER TO GO AND FIND THEM. POOR CHULDEN SLIPPED ON THE ICE AND STARTED SLIDING DOWN THE TREACHEROUS ICY LHOTSE FACE TO CAMP 2. ALL THE WATER FELL DOWN THE SLOPES OF THE LHOTSE FACE AND SOMEHOW BY SOME MIRACLE HE MANAGED TO SAVE HIMSELF..

SHAKING TERRIBLY HE BRAVELY CONTINUED UP TO FIND THE GROUP WHICH HE DULY DID. POOR KIKO ONLY GOT TWO FINGERS FULL OF WATER WHICH HE COULDN'T UNDERSTAND WHY HE WAS GETTING SO LITTLE ( POOR CHULDEN HADN'T EXPLAINED WHAT HAD HAPPENED TO HIM AS HE SKIDDED ON THE ICE NEARLY TO HIS DEATH) THE GROUP WAS EXHAUSTED WHEN THEY ARRIVED, ABSOLUTELY FROZEN AND OXYGEN DEPLETED BUT THE MAIN THING WAS WE WERE ALL BACK AT THE SOUTH COL SAFELY IF NOT A LITTLE DRAMATICALLY. RODRIGO AND PERTEMBA MANNED THE RADIOS ALL NIGHT AND I THINK A FEW PEOPLE COULD HEAR WHAT WAS GOING ON - THE DISCOVERY TEAM WERE GREAT, BEN HAS BEEN FULLY IN THE LOOP WITH OUR TEAM FROM THE GETGO. PERTEMBA WHOSE MAIN WORDS TO US ARE "POLE POLE" WHICH MEANS SLOWLY SLOWLY IN NEPALI WAS SCREAMING DOWN THE RADIO TO THE GROUP MOVE FASTER, FASTER FORGET ANY "POLE POLE"

NOW!!!!ONCE I'D SEEN ANDRONICO WAS OK AND STILL WAS MANAGING TO JOKE WITH ME I WENT BACK TO MY TENT AND LISTENED TO ERNESTO AND RODRIGO ON THE RADIO IT WAS ABOUT 3.00AM BY NOW AND I WAS EXHAUSTED!!! THE MAIN THING WAS WE WERE BACK AT THE SOUTH COL AND THE WHOLE TEAM HAD MADE THE SUMMIT TOGETHER AND WE WERE THE FIRST TEAM OF THE SEASON TO BE THERE.. TOO TIRED TO FEEL EUPHORIC AT THIS STAGE!! WE HAD AN 8.00AM START TO MOVE OFF THE SOUTH COL AND BACK DOWN TO CAMP 2 WHERE I COULD START TO FEEL SAFER BUT STILL THE ICEFALL TO NAVIGATE..THEN I CAN CELEBRATE!!!!!! I AM NOW BACK AT BASECAMP BUT SO TIRED FROM A WEEKS EXHAUSTING CLIMBING SO I'LL FILL IN THE 16TH AND 17TH DRAMAS TOMORROW. THE 11TH, 12TH AND 13TH WILL BE UPDATED IN THE NEXT DAY OR TWO BUT I WAS SO TIRED THIS MORNING I LEFT MY JOURNAL AT CAMP 2!! A VERY HAPPY GIRL WHO HAS ACHIEVED A BIG DREAM IS SAYING GOODNIGHT FROM BASECAMP!