

03/05

Maestri Egger February Attempt Report

Kevin Thaw and Myself returned to Patagonia for the Feb 2003 season and arrived in the last major Town of Chalten on 1st of February. We arranged the usual transport of Horses to take our equipment to Camp Bridwell at the foot of the Torre peaks.

The weather previous to this date had been at best miserable with only one team climbing the compressor route. Previous to that during the winter months Alex Huber had been there to attempt the Maestri Egger and got as far as the triangular snowfield 400m up the route before retreating! The reasons for this are not known.

There were a total of eight teams in camp awaiting good weather, they were as follows.

Two Spanish teams hoping to climb compressor route.

Two Austrian Teams with one for Titanic on Torre Egger and one for Compressor route.

Two Italian teams, One hoping for the compressor route.

The other lead by Mauro Bole or 'BU BU' as he is known was hoping to put up a mixed route on the south face of Cerro Torre, using a box type construction and 300 bolts!

One Slovenian team who hoped to climb the Ice route Exocet on Cerro Standhart
Ourselves hoping to climb the Maestri Egger.

Not one team had yet to successfully gain the foot of their prospective routes, some had been there for one month already!

We waited for three weeks and then attempted to take our gear up to the mountain despite the horrendous winds. we reached the glacier and were blown over frequently by strong wind, we were carrying very heavy loads and still we could not stand upright.

We ditched our gear in some woods behind the Glacier and would return on a better day. Almost 5 days later the weather cleared and we took our loads to the foot of the Bivouac a few hours from the base of the Cerro Torre. The weather had been so bad previously that the upper section of the Maestri Egger was thickly coated in ice and rime. We knew that this would take at least one full day of sun on the east face for it to cleanse properly and make the route at little more objectively safe from falling ice. This is a common factor in deciding when to climb after a storm, as when the face is in sun after a storm it's suicidal to even consider an attempt. we would get some sleep at the Bivi and wake at 5am and consider our options. We woke at 5am to horrendous wind and cold and the barometer had plummeted sharply indicating a low front approaching. we would see what midday brought and sadly it was streaming cirrus cloud from the west which means only one thing! No climbing. We decided to return to camp, as we made it down clouds enveloped Cerro Torre.

Ben Bransby and Swiss climber Ivan Tretsch came over from Rio Blanco as during our night at the Bivi they had been climbing the Whillan's route on the East Face of Poincinot. The east side of Fitzroy receives all the worst weather last and a days climbing could be had when Cerro Torre is in cloud.

We had been there for almost 5 weeks and most other teams had gone home with none of them climbing anything.

' Only Ben Bransby and ourselves including 'Bu Bu' remained and even he had changed objectives! His experienced team realising that with such bad weather siege style in Patagonia doesn't work so they had opted to attempt a mixed route on Cerro Adela. However, with bad Serac fall and many hanging glaciers above them they had pinned down in their advanced tent on the glacier for several days at a time and had climbed nothing in the same time that Kevin and I had been there.

The weather had not changed to our benefit in over a month and we were maybe thinking it wasn't going too. We only had one week left and time was running out. As any climbers who have invested so much previous time and effort in any project we were slightly frustrated, but optimistic never the less. As you must keep repeating the same mantra in Patagonia 'The weather will get better' The weather never did get better and we were forced to retrieve our gear on a thoroughly miserable day which made for quite the hard workload. So, at least we were keeping our hard work ethic intact before leaving. We left 'Bu Bu' pondering his fate and knew that we wanted to return next season. For if we had got on the route and failed we could have faced up top our lack of ability or commitment. However, we never even reached the base of the mountain on this trip and know that we want to return and give it our all. At least that way we will know for sure, as with such commitment already invested in the route we truly want to give it the kind of effort we think it needs. We hope you will not consider it an insult if we make a plea for a little help on our return? and hopefully we will be able to pay back some of the kind help we have received from your fine organisation.

yours sincerely

