

Chamlang North Face Expedition 2010

Location: Khumbu Himalaya, Nepal
Dates: November 15th to December 7th 2010

Aim: First Ascent of the North Face of Chamlang (7319m)
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Year: 2010

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Abstract

Between the dates November 15th and December 7th 2010 the members of the "Chamlang North Face Expedition 2010" (Graham Zimmerman Cory Richards and Hayden Kennedy) were in the Khumbu region of the Nepali Himalaya with the intention of opening a new route on the remote North Face of Chamlang.

Due to heavy snowfall, reports of bad conditions and fatalities on North Faces in the area the objective was changed to the South Face of Nuptse.

Access was completed with little hindrance. After scoping the face and carrying loads to the base of the face, and getting a subsequent closer view it was determined that it was well out of shape and to far dangerous to warrant an attempt.

626



10/11

Contents

Introduction	4
Expedition Members	5
Adventurous Activities	7
Administration and Logistics	
<i>Destination Area</i>	8
<i>Research materials and information sources</i>	8
<i>Training</i>	8
<i>Permission and Permits</i>	8
<i>Fund-raising and Finances</i>	8
<i>Insurance</i>	8
<i>Travel Transportation and Freighting</i>	8
<i>Food and Accommodation</i>	8
<i>Communications</i>	9
<i>Risks and Hazards</i>	9
<i>Medical Arrangements</i>	9
<i>Environmental and social impact</i>	9
Diary/Log	10
Conclusions	11
Appendix A – Photos from Expedition	

Introduction

The Khumbu area of Nepal is steeped in alpine climbing legend, from Sir Edmond Hillary's first ascent of Everest (1954) to some of the most technical modern routes in the world such as the Lowe-RosKelly (1989) on the East face of Tawoche. It is a beautiful venue both in terms of the alpine climbing opportunities and the culture.



Fig 1 – The Khumbu Region of the Nepali Himal.

The original goal of this expedition was to visit the remote Bader valley to attempt the North face of Chamlang (7319m). Due to conditions plans were changed and the South face of Nuptse (7861m) was chosen as the new objective.

Further issues with conditions prevented the team from climbing on the South Face.



Fig 2 – View of the Khumbu from Space (courtesy of NASA)

Expedition Members

3. Expedition Members.



Fig 3 – Graham

Graham Zimmerman

- Age: 24
- Nationality: New Zealand/American,
- NZAC membership 1580, Overseas Section, Former Otago Section Committee Member,
- Also member of American Alpine Club
- Occupation: Emergency Medical Technician, Geophysics Surveyor, Athlete

From the FAs in the greater ranges to single day ascents of Grade VI Yosemite test pieces, as well as a wealth of steep ice in the Canadian Rockies and New Zealand (including a number of first ascents), Graham has amassed an impressive amount of experience incongruous with his years.

In 2010 Graham completed a successful expedition to Patagonia where despite some of the worst weather ever seen in the area he was successful in completing a first ascent on Los Gemelos ('The Slash' IV+ 5.10b A2, 1200ft) in Torres Del Paine N.P. In April he undertook an expedition to the Ruth Glacier of Alaska and completed the first ascent of 'Vitalogy' (AK Grade 5, M6+, WI5, 5.9, A1, 4,600ft) on the SW Buttress of Mt Bradley. For these accomplishments Graham received the 2010 Alpinist of the Year from the Canterbury Mountaineering Club (New Zealand).



Fig 4 – Cory

Cory Richards

- Age: 29
- Nationality: American
- Member of American Alpine Club
- Occupation: Professional Photographer and Alpinist

Cory has been climbing for 23 years, the last six of which have included a dozen international expeditions. In the past year, he's established two new grade VI's in the Khumbu (Cobra Norte on Kvangde and the South Face Central Spur of Taboche), attempted to solo Makalu in a single push getting turned back at 7,500 m, and climbed Ama Dablam in under two weeks round trip from Kathmandu. He has also soloed several of the classic Peruvian ice faces including the W.Face of Tocllaraji in single push round trip style from Huaraz. His resume also includes several major FAs in the Canadian Rockies as well as pertinent repeats and attempts on routes in both the Cordillera Blanca and Argentina.



Fig 5 – Hayden

Hayden Kennedy

- Age: 19
- Nationality: American
- Member of American Alpine Club
- Occupation: Climber

Hayden is a bold young alpinist. With ascents of technical terrain ranging from the "Super Coulior" on Cerro Fitz Roy and the FFA of Corallo Route on San Rafael (V 5.12) in Patagonia to Free ascents of El Capitan and sport climbs up to 5.14b he is truly deserving of his nickname "The Future". Hayden has been awarded the 2010 Bates award from the American Alpine Club.

Adventurous Activities

The original goal of this expedition was to visit the remote Barun valley to attempt the North face of Chamlang (7319m). Due to heavy snowfall and subsequent reports accidents and failures on Northern aspects plans were changed in an attempt to improve safety and chances of success. The new objective chosen was a new route on the South face of Nuptse to the right of the infamous 'Cobweb Wall'.

This was based on beta from friends and fellow climbers who had been attempting the West Ridge of Nuptse only a few weeks prior. They reported that the South face looked to be in excellent condition. Multiple reports (including 2 fatal accidents) and observations from around the area confirmed the teams suspicion that the North faces in the area including Chamlang were in poor and dangerous shape for climbing. The decision to change objectives was an easy and logical one.

The approach into base camp took place over 5 days and went without a hitch. The team was well acclimatized at this point, everyone having been attempting routes in other parts of the Khumbu. The only point to note was the weather in Lukla (the location of the airport and access point to the Khumbu), consistent cloudy conditions prevented flights for weeks creating problems for the team and their equipment as well as everyone else trying to get in and out of the area.

Upon arrival at basecamp equipment for an alpine style push on the face was carried to the base. Time was also spent taking photos of the face and scoping the line. Upon arrival back to basecamp the photos were analyzed on the computer and it was found that large sections of the route were devoid of ice under which loose slabby rock was exposed. Due to this and the fact that the face was visibly continuing to melt at an alarming rate it was deemed out of shape.

With other objectives in the area appearing to be under the same conditions and lacking permits for other peaks the team was forced to retreat. Walking back to Lukla in 2 long days from basecamp and once again waiting for the weather to clear in Lukla before flying back to Kathmandu.

Administration and Logistics

Destination Area

Research materials and Information Sources

Research was completed through the American Alpine Club's Library (including the American Alpine Journal), the Himalayan Database and the British Alpine Club's Himalayan Index. Below is a list of the routes already opened on the peaks discussed:

Chamlang:

Year	Route	References
1961	S Ridge	(AAJ, 1963, p517), (AJ, 1962, p351), (HJ, 1966, P115)
1981	N Face (far E side, not to summit)	(AAJ, 1982, p208)
1986	S Ridge (repeat)	(AAJ, 1987, p226)
1986	W Ridge	(AAJ, 1987, p226)
1990	NW Face to W Ridge	(AAJ, 1991, p217), (HJ, 1990/91, p163)
1991	S Ridge (Var)	(AAJ, 1992, p196), (AJ, 1993, p112), (HJ 1991/92, p26), (MEF, 1991)
1992	N Face Attempt	(AAJ, 1993, p 208)

Nuptse:

Since Nuptse became the new objective once the team was already in the Khumbu region research had to be completed through conversation with a team from New Hampshire who had just been attempting the face.

Consultation was also been made with many alpinists who have visited the Khumbu. These include Conrad Anker and Mark Allen, this is on top of Cory's personal experience in the area.

Training

In order to prepare for the expedition the team members adhered to a rigorous training regime which involved aggressive circuit and cardiovascular training. This was complimentary to huge amounts of time spent climbing in Yosemite, Utah, Montana and the North Cascades, all in the United States.

Permission and Permits

Nepal Visas are easily acquired at the border or airport. Climbing permits were organized through Sherpa Shangri-La, since this expedition took place during the winter the costs for permits were far less than during the high season.

Finances

Below can be found the per person budget for the expedition and a total budget for all three climbers

Flights	\$2,200	
Outfitter (Sherpa Shangri-La) (Including peak fees, liaison officer, base camp, labor accommodation and food)	\$3,600	
Insurance	\$200	
Other and Contingency	\$1000	
Total per person	\$7000	
TOTAL FOR EXPEDITION	\$21,000	

Insurance

Climbing insurance was provided through 'Global Rescue'.

Travel Transport and Freight

All equipment was carried with the team members on their plane flights. No overweight baggage weights were incurred since flying from the United States (2x50lb bag allowance per seat).

Food and Accommodation

All food, accommodation and labor (including cook, porters and Sidars) was organized through Jiban at Sherpa Shangri-La. The organization and service was excellent and the team highly recommends them to anyone organizing climbing or trekking trips in Nepal.

They can be found at www.sherpashangrilatrek.com.

Communications

Communication with the outside world was limited during the expedition. No satellite phone was carried, although it would have been a welcome safety net had the need arisen.

Internet service was available in the town of Dingboche, a 2 hour walk from Nuptse BC.

Chamlang base camp would have been 3-5 days walk from the nearest communication lines.

Risks and hazards

Beyond the inherent risks of alpine climbing on rock and ice and traveling over glaciated terrain the risks of spending time in the Khumbu were not abundant. Travel between tea houses and to base camp was on good trails or over easy terrain and base camp was situated in a very safe and sheltered location.

The main concern was sickness, and for this a comprehensive medical kit was carried.

Medical Arrangements

Graham is a United States Nationally Registered Emergency Medical Technician trained in both urban and wilderness medicine. He carried an extensive medical kit with him so that he would have been able to deal with the multitude of possible problems that could have arisen during the expedition. Cory is a Wilderness First Responder, trained to deal with emergencies in the back country. On account of their training, prearranged insurance, and knowledge of where the local emergency facilities were located, it was felt that the team was very well prepared to deal with an emergency situation had it arisen (with their team or another in the area).

The medical kit carried included runs of antibiotics, heavy pain killers and altitude drugs.

Environmental and Social Impact Assessment

Graham, Cory and Hayden strictly followed a 'Leave No Trace' policy both while in town and in the mountains. This involved ensuring all human waste and garbage was packed out or disposed of properly while in the beautiful mountains of Nepal.

The local community is well adapted to alpinists and the team was well accepted in the local villages.

Diary/log

Prior to November 19 th all team members were attempting climbs in other regions of the Khumbu, while none of these trip were successful, they were beneficial since reports and data on the conditions in the area were collected.
November 19-20 – Waiting in Lukla for baggage to fly in from Kathmandu, delays due to valley fog making flights impossible.
November 21 – Walked to Phakding. Stayed in teahouse.
November 22 – Walked to Namche Bazaar. Stayed in teahouse.
November 23 – Walked to Phortse. Stayed in teahouse.
November 24 – Walked to Dingboche. Stayed in teahouse.
November 25 – Walked to Base camp below S face of Nuptse, located on a well-protected flat area on the Western marginal moraine of the Nuptse Glacier.
November 26 – December 2 – Acclimatized and scoped line on the South face. Carried gear to the base of the route. At the end of this time period after diligent observation and much discussion the difficult decision was made that the face was out of condition and to dangerous to warrant an attempt at which point all gear caches were retrieved and the team prepared for their retreat from the mountains.
December 3 – Walked to Namche Bazaar
December 4 – walked to Lukla
December 5-6 – waiting in Lukla for weather to clear so that we could fly
December 7 – Flew Back to Kathmandu

Conclusions

This expedition can be seen as an example of when the pieces do not fall into place. Logistically and from a planning perspective the "Chamlang North Face Expedition 2010" went off without a hitch, with the exception of the actual climbing. Unfortunately, the conditions this season in the Khumbu were poor, shown by the lack of activity in the area this season not only from this expedition but from most others.

The decisions made on this expedition not only ensured that the team came back safe and sound but upon reflection have resulted in all the team members becoming stronger more humble alpinists.

Huge thanks goes out to the Mount Everest Foundation for the support.

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Appendix – photos from expedition



Fig 6 – Nuptse South Face



Fig 6 – Ama Dablam



Fig 7 – East Face Taboche