

ForRangers is a dedicated group of individuals raising money for the welfare of rangers who risk their lives daily to protect Africa's endangered species. The For Rangers initiative is run by Pete Newland and Sam Taylor, two incredible individuals who not only undertake extraordinary events to raise money for ranger welfare, but also work with rangers on the ground and see the difference that every single one of them makes. In 2019, they attempted to summit Mt Everest on their toughest mission to date. Here's an extract from Sam's blog about the final push to the top.



Sam Taylor | Co-founder, ForRangers

We have had a few days of fried spam and are getting some relative warmth back into our bones at Base Camp after our first ill-fated attempt at a summit push. The ice fall is changing shape and form rapidly now as the days become increasingly warmer. Coming down from our aborted mission, Geth described the ice as 'messy'. I had a rather different description...

Daily we look at the three different weather forecasts that come through on Jay's phone - we gather around him with the keen interest of a pack of dogs. "24th looks good" announces someone. "Winds drop on 22nd" says someone else.

It becomes clear that a small break will allow us to push to the summit on May 23rd. This gives us (and our Sherpas) a couple of days rest before we push up to Camp 2 again. We will have winds of around 30 mph on the summit, but this is ok and the team is feeling strong.

We leave Base Camp on the 20th. It feels good to know that this really is it. Any aborted attempt now will mean the expedition is over. Our full six-man group is together again and we are making the transition up to Camp 1 with our individual Sherpas.

The Sherpas are super-human, carrying oxygen and supplies with seemingly inexhaustible energy. They are strong men. Hard men. But they are here to keep us safe, and they take their job seriously.

Those of us that made a summit attempt on the 16th are feeling strong. Despite the chest infection, Pete seems good. He is deliberately pacing himself.

The climb to Camp 2 is relatively uneventful and we rest up there well. The next afternoon, we will push out to scale the Lhotse face and set up at Camp 3, where we will sleep on oxygen and prepare for what is essentially a 24-plus hour summit push (with a small rest at Camp 4).

As we leave Camp 2, Tom stops and turns back. He is pretty upset, but his chest and congestion have made this incredibly hard. We are five.

We slog out towards the face. I'm strapping on my crampons when we turn and see Geth and Pete a small way away, shaking hands. I wander back towards them and it dawns on me what the handshake was about. I'm not sure what to say to Pete. This has been his dream. We have been training, planning and saving for this for the last two years.

"Something's not right and if I carry on, I'll become a statistic". Pete is famous for pushing his body to the absolute limits and for him to say this warrants no response. This must be serious. I'm not entirely sure what to do. I awkwardly hug my mate and turn back to the others. I'm still with three highly competent and accomplished mountaineers, but somehow without my mate, I feel extremely vulnerable.

We climb.

As we move, the initial 45 minutes feel like a horror film. We step aside as a climber is lowered down on a pulley system. He's groaning but conscious. Then comes another, similar package, this time 40 m further up. And another. I contemplate turning back. We reach 'The Balcony' where we rest and change oxygen cylinders. The arrival at a featured landmark provides some morale, and we keep going, now stronger.

And then, the sun rises. Suddenly we are at Hillary Step and we all know we will summit. I'm going to finish this. I am gutted not to be with Pete, who got me this far, but I'll finish this.

We summited. I 'posted' a postcard I had written to my father, which was caught by the 30 mph winds. I left the Kenyan postage stamp featuring him up there along with a plait containing locks of hair from my wife and two daughters, and a beaded bracelet that Briar, my eldest, had made for me. We held the Kenya flag together and the For Rangers flag, as I had promised Pete I would do. I feel extremely honoured and proud to have done so. We took photos. And then we turned around and we climbed down. And that was that.

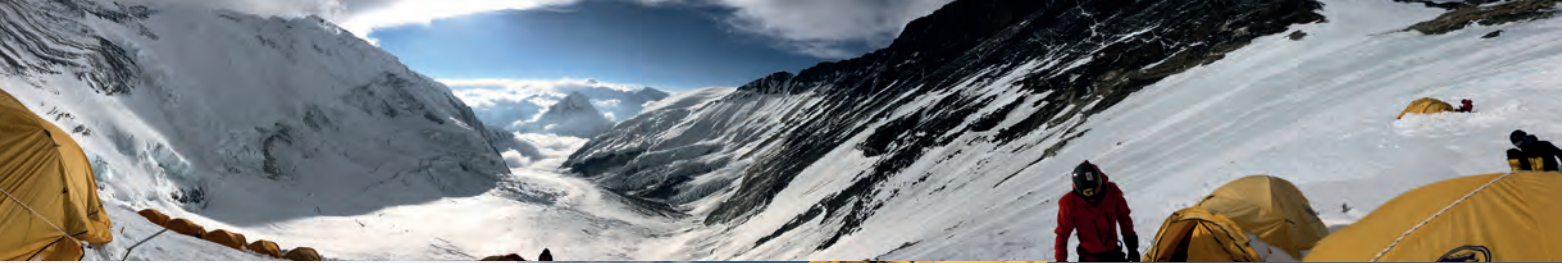
I'd like to say a huge thank you to Jay Morton for his guiding, humour and making sure I didn't make too many stupid decisions. Many thanks to all of the other boys we climbed with. To Pete, for inspiring me to have a crack at everything. And lastly, to my long-suffering wife Flick and my two children, who so often sit waiting at home for me to finish another ludicrous endeavour.

Thank you all so much for all your support.

Donate to the For Rangers Everest expedition at: uk.virginmoneygiving.com/everest-forrangers

ALL IMAGES FORRANGERS

ON TOP OF THE WORLD



Mt Everest sits at 8,848m above sea level.

It is a gruelling climb, with extremely harsh winds, freezing temperatures and of course, high altitude!

With others in his team, Sam summited the highest peak in the world on 22nd May 2019.

