

14TH MAY - CAMP 3 - CAMP 4

WE WERE WOKEN AT 5.00AM AND I HAD JUST HAD THE BEST NIGHTS SLEEP EVER ON OXYGEN DESPITE THE HUGE MASK THAT WAS STRAPPED TO MY NECK!! RELUCTANTLY I GOT OUT OF THE LOVELY SLEEPING BAG MY MUM BROUGHT ME AS A GOOD LUCK PRESENT AND GOT DRESSED TO BEGIN THE 5 HOUR WALK TO THE SOUTH COL. I HAD NO BREAKFAST AND WE WERE HEADED OFF AT ABOUT 5.30, YOU HAVE TO BE CAREFUL IN CAMP 3 AS THERE ARE CREVASSES EVERYWHERE, I EVEN TRIPPED OVER A TENT ROPE AS THE LEDGES ARE SO SMALL AND MY CRAMPONS RIPPED SOMEONES TENT BUT I WAS TOO SCARED OF FALLING INTO THE CREVASSE THAT WAS NEXT TO THE TENT TO APOLOGISE FOR MY SMALL LACERATION OF THEIR TENT!! WE HEADED UP THE LHOTSE FACE TOWARDS THE YELLOW BAND, MOVING NOW INTO THE "DEATH ZONE" WHICH IS ABOVE 25,000FT ALTHOUGH I WAS ON A LOW FLOW OF OXYGEN AS WAS ANDRONICO, I HAVE TO MENTION THAT KIKO, MISAIL AND ERNESTO WERE ALL NOT ON OXYGEN AT THIS STAGE AND HAD VERY HEAVY PACKS WHICH MAKES IT EXHAUSTING UP AT THIS HEIGHT. THIS HELPED ENORMOUSLY AND I FELT A LOT STRONGER THAN I HAD ARRIVING UP TO CAMP 2 ON 11TH MAY! THE YELLOW BAND IS A ROCKY PATCH ON THE LHOTSE FACE, YELLOWISH IN COLOUR OF COURSE, THAT REQUIRES SOME SCRAMBLING AND TIRING PULLING YOURSELF UP ON THE ROPES, ITS NOT THAT ITS TECHNICALLY DIFFICULT BUT THE ALTITUDE MAKES YOUR BREATHING SO LABOURED THAT EVEN ON OXYGEN YOU ARE GASPING INTO YOUR MASK. YOU THEN KEEP ON MOVING UPWARDS TOWARDS THE GENEVA SPUR WHICH I HAD THOUGHT, OBVIOUSLY NOT HAVING DONE MY RESEARCH THAT IT WAS JUST A ROCKY TRAVERSE TO THE SOUTH COL. WELL I WAS WRONG IT WAS A MAZE OF ROPES AND PRETTY CONSISTANTLY STEEP, THE ALTITUDE GAIN IS NEARLY 3,000FT AGAIN AND ITS STRENOUS WORK. I PULLED MY WAY GASPING UP THE ROPES FOLLOWING SHERPAS FERRYING HUGE LOADS UP TO THE SOUTH COL - PRAYING THEY WERENT CLIPPED INTO THE SAME ROPE AS ME!! AFTER A LONG ROCKY TRAVERSE WE ARRIVED AT THE MOST BARREN DESOLATE AND I HATE TO SAY QUITE DIRTY SOUTH COL.. LACERATED TENTS WERE EVERYWHERE A CONSTANT REMINDER OF HOW STRONG THE WINDS ARE UP THERE AND I SOON NAVIGATED MY WAY TO OUR TENTS WHICH WERE STUGGLING TO STAY ANCHORED!! WE ARRIVED AROUND MIDDAY AND SETTLED INTO OUR TENTS AND GOT PREPARED FOR OUR SUMMIT ATTEMPT WE WERE BEING WOKEN UP AT 8.00PM, ABOUT THE TIME MOST NORMAL PEOPLE HAVE DINNER! I WAS SHARING A TENT WITH ERNESTO AS THEY WANTED TO SPLIT ANDRONICO AND I UP AS MY TIME KEEPING ON THESE EARLY STARTS CAN BE A BIT TARDY AND TO MONITOR US AND OUR LIQUID INTAKE AT THAT ALTITUDE. ITS VERY IMPORTANT TO DRINK ALOT OF WATER AND ITS ALSO A VERY TIME CONSUMING PROCESS MELTING THE SNOW UP HIGH. I TRIED REALLY HARD TO SLEEP BUT THE ANXIETY OF WHAT LAY AHEAD WAS HUGE AND I TOSSED AND TURNED TRYING TO IGNORE THE HOWLING GALE OUTSIDE. WE HAD HEARD A LOT OF PEOPLE WERE GOING TO TRY AND SUMMIT TODAY AS IT WAS THE FIRST WINDOW OF THE SEASON. AT 8.00PM ERNESTO WOKE ME AND I HAVE TO CONFESS I WAS VERY NERVOUS ABOUT THE WIND WHICH I WAS TOLD WAS 50MPH AND NORMAL CONDITIONS FOR UP THERE SO WE WERE A GO!!