

8TH MAY

Clark woke us up at 8.00am saying that today was a "Go" and we were moving up the high camp. He wanted us ready fast with our tents packed up and ready to go by 9.30am. Adrenalin kicked in for me and it really felt like the push for the summit was on. In a complete fluster i managed to get all my stuff packed up and i lightened my load again substantially by losing my toothbrush (some people cut their toothbrushes in half to save on the weight) so i just thought i would leave mine behind completely! I just took one set of clothes with me and even scaled back on my cosmetics - not sunblock though!!

We werent ready by 9.30am, its quite a long procedure taking down our camp and burying our stash that is to be left behind but we were on the way up by 11.00am. Our same route took us straight up the headwall to the sheer blue ice just beneath the fixed lines. We took a break here and noticed quite a few people behind us. There were the IT guys from UBS, and 4 ukrainian guys whom had arrived at camp 4 the night prior. Behind them the army guys were doing a carry.. I felt pressured to move fast up the fixed lines - the Ukrainians were quite consistently strong. The ice was as bad as it had been on the day of our carry and i was really tired going up the headwall. Again my achilles throbbed from walking like a duck on the thick blue ice and my arms were so tired i could hardly haul myself up the fixed lines.

I felt much better when i reached the ridge, its probably psycological with me, in that as i hated the headwall so much my body automatically felt tired on it. I was back to my old self again at the top of the headwall and happily got stuck into some chocolate as we took a break on the ridge. We collected our loads from our carry and continued up the ridge. I dont know if i have mentioned but im really not very good with heights!! The ridge was really exposed and we were often walking on something less than a foot wide with thousands of feet drops either side. You never know if you fall at one of these exceptionally exposed points whether you would drag your rope team with you or not.. anyway i tried not to think about the exposure as i precariously trod on the narrow knife edged ridge. The scarey thing was that carrying such a huge pack, combined with the sharp gusts of wind that kept occuring whether you would get caught off balance - i didnt like this part at all!! Finally after about 5 hours we arrived up at high camp at around 17,200ft. The Ukrainians were right up behind us and the IT guys were about 2 hours behind us and we raced ahead to grab the one snow wall that had been already built up at the high camp.. We then spent ages building more walls, pitching the tents and settling into high camp.

Dinner was ramen noodles, freeze dried mash pototo nd soup! Clarks cuisine had taken a sudden decline! I actually like noodles up high, its one of the few things i can eat.. but Guy and Mark hate them from years and years of mountain life!! We all piled into one tent for meals. We only had 2 tents up here and were split into two groups of 3.

After our carbo loading dinner we got ready to rest for the night in case it was good weather in the morning in which case we would try for the summit. I had my usual adrenalin rush of pre summit nerves and found it hard to sleep. Night one of no teeth cleaning.. hate it! The wind was already ripping at our tents as we went to sleep, feels like we are high up now.