

17th DECEMBER

Hamish still wasn't feeling fully better in the morning so it was decided that he would return to basecamp and I would continue up to camp 2 with Luis and Dorje. Oh, I forgot to mention that Dorje had run back to basecamp yesterday afternoon to bring up a new stove for us which he duly did this morning. He is just so fit that he likes to run up and down between all the camps - it's easy for him! I actually thought maybe he was tempted to head back down as part of a cunning plan to have one more dinner cooked by Carolina! He arrived up at camp 1 at around 9.00am and it only took him an hour and a bit!! We all packed up and got ready to move up to camp 2. We said goodbye to Hamish and off we went. All was going well until just above the col at around 18,000 feet when I suddenly felt a bit lightheaded but I decided to keep quiet and see if I imminently recovered which is what I was hoping would happen. It was only when Luis said that my lips had turned blue, a symptom of not getting enough oxygen into your system, that I began to doubt my capability of pulling off this extremely rapid ascent of Aconcagua. We finally arrived into camp 2 which is just under 20,000ft and I was fairly helpless in assisting Luis and Dorje building a rock wall and pitch our tent. We had a couple of Germans camped next door, but I wasn't feeling remotely sociable at this stage.

I got into the tent and managed to force down some food and agreed to take a rest day the next day. I had secretly hoped that I would feel so good at this point that I would be able to try for the summit tomorrow, alas at this point I was praying that I would actually be able to get to the summit at all. All these thoughts were running through my head - make a back up plan to try again in January when I'm more rested..... No way am I coming back in January when I've taken the time and effort to get to camp 2 already, not to mention the fact I didn't want to look at the state of the poor mules later in the season.. and so the conflicting thoughts went through my mind constantly. The conclusion to these thoughts were crystal clear - I have to do this climb now. I fell into a restless slumber with the wind flapping noisily against our tent.