



AAC Publications

Gasherbrum V (7,147m), south ridge, attempt.

Pakistan, Karakoram, Baltoro Muztagh

After their climbs in the Trango area, Aymeric Clouet, Christian Trommsdorff, and Patrick Wagnon continued up the Baltoro for their main objective, the west face of Gasherbrum IV (7,925m). Once established at base camp, after more bad weather and a forecast for it to remain unstable, it was obvious that the big faces, particularly the west face—the so-called Shining Wall—were far too heavily laden to make any serious attempts. Instead the three opted for Gasherbrum V, which has no recorded ascent.

Running northeast from the main summit towards the Gasherbrum Glacier are three tops; East I (7,120m), East II (7,050m) and East III (7,006m). In 1978 Japanese had reached as far as East III, when the leader died in a fall and the expedition was called off. An attempt by French two years later was also unsuccessful. In 2010 Koreans tried the west face, reaching 6,550m before forced down by bad weather.

A predicted small weather window allowed Clouet, Trommsdorff, and Wagnon to make an attempt on the south ridge of the main summit, approaching up the Gasherbrum South Glacier to the east. The three climbed a long snow slope, and then a snow couloir through a more rocky section, to reach the crest, which they followed to a bivouac at ca 6,500m, below the steep rocky upper section of the ridge. Here, they decided snow conditions, and an approaching unstable air mass, made it too dangerous to continue.

In order to minimize risk, they left at 5 p.m. to descend during the night. Exactly at sunset (8 p.m.), when they had reached ca 6,000m, Trommsdorff was at an anchor, and Clouet and Wagnon, having already gone down, were trying to install another, when the team was hit by an avalanche. It swept Clouet and Wagnon 15m down the face before they were held on the ropes. Clouet was badly shaken but fine, whereas Wagnon was in great pain with an injury to his foot.

The ensuing rappel descent of the remaining 500m was tortuous. They finally reached the glacier, crossed to the east side, and descended to a safe campsite at 5,300m, which they reached at 4 a.m., just as the sun was rising. It took another two days to regain base camp, Wagnon at first on all fours using knee protectors made by cutting up sleeping mats. After two days they lost hope of seeing a rescue helicopter and Wagnon was evacuated by mule to Askole. He was later diagnosed as having a very bad sprain and fracture to the talus.

Lindsay Griffin, Mountain INFO, from information supplied by Christian Trommsdorff and Patrick Wagnon, France

Images



Gasherbrum V from the Gasherbrum South Glacier.



Gasherbrum V from the Gasherbrum South Glacier, showing the route of attempt on the east flank and south ridge.



Trommsdorff followed by Clouet in the upper couloir on the east flank of Gasherbrum V's south ridge. Chogolisa in the background.



Trommsdorff in the couloir on Gasherbrum V.



Trommsdorff and Clouet on the lower slopes of the east flank of Gasherbrum V's south ridge. Gasherbrum South Glacier below. Behind is part of the southwest ridge of Gasherbrum VI—North East Shoulder (left) and Pt. 6,500m.

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