



## Alexander Ruchkin, 1963 – 2015

**Alexander "Sasha" Ruchkin, along with his climbing partner, Vyacheslav Ivanov, died while attempting a new route on the south face of Huandoy Sur (6,160m) in Peru.** The estimated date of the tragedy was August 27, 2015. As reported by the rescuers who found the bodies on the glacier at the base of the wall, the cause of their death was the failure of the belay station. It is impossible to figure out the principal cause, whether falling ice or rocks or a leader fall.

Alexander and Slava were well acquainted and had already made several big ascents, including the first ascent of the main southwest face of Kusum Kanguru (6,370m), a 10-day climb for which they won the Russian Piolet d'Or for 2013.

Alexander was one of the most brilliant representatives of the Soviet/Russian mountaineering school. He was born in Kazakhstan, grew up and studied in Ukraine, and later lived and climbed mountains in Kazakhstan and Russia. He absorbed all the mountaineering traditions of the former Soviet Union.

Over the years he climbed classic routes in the Pamir, Tien Shan, Alps, and Patagonia, including direct new routes up the north faces of Ak-Su North and Svobodnaya Korea (Free Korea) in Kyrgyzstan, and new routes on the Troll Wall in Norway, Great Sail Peak on Baffin Island, and on Kyzyl Asker and in the Minya Konka range in China. That is by no means a complete list of the significant first ascents he made.

One of Alexander's most important achievements undoubtedly was the first ascent of the north face of Jannu in Nepal in 2004. He played a key role in climbing the upper, most difficult part of the wall. Together with the other members of the team, he received the Piolet d'Or in Chamonix.

Although Jannu and other ascents were completed with large teams, in recent years Alexander's true calling card became his two-person, autonomous-mode first ascents. These include such climbs as Kusum Kanguru in Nepal, Gongga North (Peak 6,134m) in China, and the Shark's Tooth in Greenland.

With tremendous mountaineering experience, fusing the best traditions of Soviet mountaineering and contemporary trends, Sasha was a leader of not only Russian mountaineering, but also world climbing. At 51, he continued going to the mountains with youthful enthusiasm and passion, constantly creating new plans and expressing a willingness to sacrifice a lot to make them real.

I was very fortunate not only to know Alexander but also to participate in trips and expeditions, to climb with him and just talk. He was very positive, easy-going, an absolutely agreeable friend, and at the same time a very reliable partner. I, like many others, will miss him not only in the mountains but also just in life. Sasha is survived by his wife, son, and daughter. It is so painful to see how they endure this tragedy.

Take care of yourself, folks.

– Valery Rozov, translated by Ekaterina Vorotnikova

## Images



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