



AAC Publications

Chamlang, North Spur, Attempt

Nepal, Mahalangur Himal, Barun Section

During the pre-monsoon season, a French team comprising Laurent Bibollet, Lise Billon, Emmanuel Chance, Aymeric Clouet, and Sébastien Corret attempted the unclimbed north spur of Chamlang (7,321m). After acclimatization trips on the west ridge—their planned route of descent—the team inspected the east side of the north spur from the East Hongu Glacier, hoping to avoid the initial section of the pillar, which is a steep and rotten.

On May 15, Bibollet left the expedition with what was later diagnosed as a pulmonary infection. On the 19th, from an advanced base at 5,500m on the East Hongu Glacier, the remaining four climbed up to a col (ca 6,100m) on the long ridgeline between Point 6,439m (the high point at the end of the prominent shoulder on Chamlang's north spur) and Hongku Chuli (formerly known as Pyramid Peak, 6,833m) to the northeast. This col gives access to a large glacier running northeast below the various summits of Chamlang; the French planned to climb directly from the head of this glacier to the crest of the north spur.

The ascent to the col involved eight pitches of hard ice and some moderate mixed climbing (60–70°), during which they found remnants of an attempt in 2015 by a Basque expedition (Alberto Iñurrategi, Juan Vallejo, and Mikel Zabalza), which also reached the col but was unable to progress due to bad weather and snow conditions. (They later made an alpine-style ascent of the west ridge.) On the 20th, all but Billon made a foray toward the shoulder on the north spur, reaching 6,300m (AD).

After a rest at base camp, all four returned to their camp at the col on May 25, and the following day they climbed to the shoulder (M5). They then followed the ridge up to the steepest section of the spur, where, at around 6,500m, below a huge gendarme with a big roof, they found a good, protected bivouac spot. A rough night for some members confirmed that they were not yet acclimatized for a summit push, and when the forecast pronounced bad weather for several days, the team decided to abandon the attempt.

The compelling line of the north spur has been the goal of several expeditions. In 2016, Jon Griffith and Andy Houseman (U.K.) tried the complete spur (from the west) but retreated low down after finding it too dry and very loose.

– Lindsay Griffin, from information supplied by Rodolphe Popier, Himalayan Database, France

Images



The north pillar of Chamlang from the glacier to the northeast, showing the attempted route and high point of the 2018 French expedition.



The broad north face of Chamlang with the high point of the 2018 French expedition, which started by climbing to a col on the foreground ridge (left) and then climbing the far (east) side of the north pillar.

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