



AAC Publications

David Lama, 1990 – 2019

For the millennial generation, those born between 1981 and 1996, there is no climber that systematically challenged and defined the standards and disciplines of mountain sports as David Lama did. When we lose exceptional people at much too young an age, we weep with empathy for the family and feel the loss of potential. Time heals loss slowly, and understanding and appreciating our friend's personality through their accomplishments helps us bring balance.

David was born on August 4, 1990, in Innsbruck, Austria, to Claudia and Rinzi Lama. Nestled in the eastern Alps, Innsbruck is one of the epicenters of global climbing. Claudia, an avid climber, was part of an all women's expedition in 1988 to Langtang, Nepal, where she met Rinzi, who was from the Phaphlu/ Taksindu area of the Solu Khumbu. Rinzi was her true love, as she was for him. They moved to Austria, had their son, and introduced him to the mountains. When David was five years old, Peter Habeler, an icon of Austrian climbing, recognized his ability to move over rock, without much apparent effort and with preternatural grace.

David, at the intersection of two mountain cultures, entered climbing as competitions were starting to gain momentum and become recognized as part of the growth of mountain sports. Reinhold Scherer and the Kletterzentrum Innsbruck incubated his nascent ability through mentorship, training, and coaching. David won international lead, bouldering, and ice competitions between the years of 2007 and 2009.

The pursuit of difficulty led David from the crags to mountains. He focused his efforts on the alpine, where the environment and weather create a more variable and demanding experience. He found this passion in the Greater Ranges with trips to the Karakorum and Patagonia, some successful, some not. One constant was that they were always bold and ambitious. David spent three seasons getting humbled by Cerro Torre in his quest to free climb the southeast ridge. On the 19th of January, 2012, he succeeded in his goal. Controversy surrounded the climb, as filming on the first attempt interfered with the style, ethics, and heritage of Cerro Torre. In an ironic twist to the bolts added by the film team in 2009, David and Peter Ortner completed their free climb after Hayden Kennedy and Jason Kruk removed the route's original Maestri bolts. This ascent was emblematic of the direction in which climbing—and specifically alpine climbing—was heading.

Being a professional climber in this day and age requires a keen sense of marketing and self worth. David understood at a young age that climbing was his career, and he had deep partnerships with Mammut and Red Bull, the Austrian energy drink. In working with Florian Klingler, his climbing partner and adviser, he was able to motivate climbers around the world with his personality and ability. We met four years to the month prior to his passing, climbing a route together in Zion. That fall we visited the Khumbu on the first of two trips to Lunag Ri, an unclimbed peak of around 7,000 meters on the border of Tibet and Nepal. On our second attempt he saved my life. I began to understand the true measure of who he was. Thank you, David. The eventual solo ascent of Lunag Ri in October 2018 was the peak of his dreams. It was the highest unclimbed peak in Nepal, the country of his father, and he climbed in an uncompromising style. Through these years, he found a second family with the North Face climbing team, and it was with his North Face partners Hansjörg Auer and Jess Roskelley that he lost his life in the Canadian Rockies on April 16, 2019.

Climbers around the world are at loss following the accident that befell these three young men. The depth of sorrow for the families is something we approach with deep empathy and compassion. As

strength and ability turn what was once large into the new standard, we're always reminded that the mountains have the ultimate strength. That is why we go to them. The mountains expose our weaknesses and this makes us better. We miss you David. We will ascend our next summit with you in mind.

– Conrad Anker

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