



AAC Publications

Dih Sar, Attempt and Tragedy

Pakistan, Karakoram, Ghujerab Mountains, Karun Koh Subgroup

Taking advantage of a partial loosening in COVID-19 restrictions by Polish and Pakistani authorities, Jakub Bogdański and Michał Ilczuk returned to the northern Karakoram in September for a second attempt on unclimbed Dih Sar (reported as either 6,200m or 6,363m). In September 2019 they had tried the southeast face, reaching a height of around 5,950m (AAJ 2020).

Following topographic analysis of the area while still in Poland, along with discussions with guides and mountaineers from Shimshal, the expedition reached the Dih Glacier by a shorter route than that taken in 2019. After trekking up the Zardgarben Valley above Shimshal village, they headed northwest, making the first crossing of the Broad Saddle (5,437m GPS). The porters renamed it Joshi Pass after their accompanying guide, Abbas Joshi. The guide and porters returned by the same route, with instructions to return in three days.

The two Poles began their attempt on September 30 from a lower camp than in 2019. At around 5,800m, they realized they would not be able to climb to the summit and descend to the glacier in one day, so they decided to bivouac using a “space blanket” and sleeping bags. While traversing to a possible bivy site, Bogdański, belayed by Ilczuk, slipped on steep ice and fell 40m. He badly bruised a shoulder and ribs. Ilczuk rappelled to him, cut out a platform, organized their bivouac, and sent a distress message with their Garmin inReach. The night was difficult: It snowed, and they were subject to spindrift avalanches.

Next morning, Ilczuk's feet were swollen and he lost one of his boots while trying to force it on. A rescue was initiated from Poland and involved seven mountaineers from Shimshal, led by veteran Shaheen Baig and assisted by a military helicopter. Unfortunately, an attempt to airlift Bogdański almost ended in catastrophe: The climbing rope was cut, and the helicopter rotor nearly hit the face. In the meantime, Ilczuk had begun to feel ill, and despite the efforts of Bogdański, he died during the night of October 1.

The following day, after two nights on the face and seeing a rescue team setting off toward him, fixing rope, Bogdański started to descend under his own steam, using the remaining part of the climbing rope and V-threads for rappel anchors. He was able to reach and then descend the fixed lines unaided, and walk across the glacier to the helicopter, in which he was evacuated to a hospital. The Pakistani rescue team brought down Ilczuk's body, which was then transported to Poland.

— Jerzy Wala, based on information provided by Jakub Bogdański and translated by Monika Hartman, Poland

Images



The southeast face of unclimbed Dih Sar and the approximate line of the 2020 attempt and high point. The summit is not visible but lies vertically above this high point and set further back.

Article Details

Author	Jerzy Wala
Publication	AAJ
Volume	63
Issue	95
Page	177
Copyright Date	2021
Article Type	Climbs and expeditions