

Kili Climb Report, Day 4 from the Mountain

Correspondent: Paul Francis

Filed: 7am Tuesday August 4, from Camp Karanga, 4000mASL*



The first thing I heard this morning from a nearby tent was a tribal roar – “Bring it on, I’m ready for you”.

Talk about a great start to our fifth day of tackling Mt Kilimanjaro. I was still inside my tent putting the layers on and didn’t see who it was, but I’m assuming it was Chad Walker who is 32 (although he says he’s going on 12) and works in property.

There’s never a dull moment with Chad and he’s always got a funny remark to make. Chad only joined the Kili Club after the annual Good Egg in March this year, and he’s done an awesome job. He’s also almost reached his online fund-raising target of \$10,000 – which is doubly awesome.

When he told his mum that it would be about minus 30 degrees when we get to the summit, she offered him a million bucks not to go. Clearly, he didn’t listen.

Chad’s a good bloke. He’s previously done a 100km charity walk for Oxfam, which was a walk in the park compared to this. He says the worst experience of his life was the 10 hours it took him to get to the bottom and back up to the top of the Grand Canyon.

We’ll ask him after we summit tomorrow morning if doing Kili was harder.

Another highlight for us yesterday was seeing Greg Perry take on the Barranco Wall, which is as sheer a cliff-face as you can imagine. Greg’s got a fear of heights and the fact that he was able to cling to the wall and keep going was unbelievable. Talk about inspirational.

There’s a technique to manoeuvre along that section of the mountain and you are so close to wall that you do literally kiss it. The guides don’t call it “kissing the wall” for nothing. It’s a wise move. If you fall backwards at Barranco, you are falling a long way. Greg’s best mate – and best man at his wedding - Tedd Warden was not too far away and it was just terrific to see the two of them working together.

Greg suggested they tackle Kili together, and Tedd jumped at the chance after watching the film, *The Bucket List*.

Another sensational bloke climbing with us – well, they’re all bloody Good Eggs – is Chris Gray. His wife is about to have their second child, and he’s just walked 10 metres up the hill to pass on a message. “I’m out of breath already and that’s just 10m,” he says. “The mountain looks so high, even after we’ve spent another day here, it’s still pretty high. This is just the most exhilarating thing.”

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Chris keeps pointing out how impressed he is by the local guides, but moreover, the team work of the entire 21 members of the Kili Club. "We are all working together and it's not easy for everyone and everyone struggles at different points but the great thing is that everyone helps each other," Chris says. "While we're doing this to support the kids back home, we are also supporting each other here on Kili and the team spirit is uplifting." He's spot on.

Oh, by the way, Chris woke up during the night and managed to watch the Oscar winning movie *Slumdog Millionaire* on his iPod, so while it might be cold, we are not without some creature comforts.

Chris just said for me to pass on a message to his wife: "Tell her I love her and I'll be home soon".

Consider it done, mate.

Yesterday's climb took about six hours and it was eventful. We climb in two separate teams and the teams change every day. One sets out 15 minutes before the other and the system seems to make it easier to navigate the really difficult parts of the mountain. And some of them are extraordinarily difficult.

How? Well, yesterday Paralympian Kelly Cartwright broke her foot. Don't panic – it was her prosthetic one and 24 hours later she's got a new one and is ready to go. She came prepared and it is just amazing what can be done.

One of the crew from Channel Seven's *Sunrise* program has been stricken with altitude sickness and is on a drip. Again, don't panic. He's in the very capable hands of two doctors and is recovering nicely. In fact, he's going down the mountain with one of the doctors today and will be at base camp in about five hours time where he will make a full recovery.

Joe Hockey might be quietly happy that he's on the mountain given the turmoil back home for the Liberal Party. Communications are tough up here, and we're all joking that Joe could be thankful to be out of range.

One of the boys had an accident last night: he fell backwards off the portable toilet, crashing through the rear of the toilet tent. Then he over-corrected and fell forwards through the front of the tent. It was about minus five degrees Celsius and there were a few icicles in uncomfortable places once he got himself sorted. No names, no pack drill!

The Melbourne contingent is doing a brilliant job, too. Andrew Burnes is a pretty big fella – he makes Joe Hockey look like Twiggy – and he says he's actually feeling better the more we go on. He's the only one who does. Andy Hurt was confronted with the extreme challenge of pulling himself up the

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Barranco Wall yesterday and he did an exceptional job. He could have passed for Spiderman, except for the layers on layers to keep warm.

The only husband and wife team on the climb, Penny and Gary Gerstle are holding up very nicely, too. While Penny reported suffering head aches yesterday, she's come up roses this morning. It's really nice to have her here with us. She adds another dimension to the team. Gary's got a great personal mantra, often quoting Winston Churchill. The British bulldog once said, "we make a living by what we get, we make a life by what we give." I like it. It sums up the mood of our Kili Club.

Everyone is amazed at the food on the mountain. Our porters cook us sensational meals every night and each morning, and last night we had a banquet of soup, vegetable curry, coconut rice and beans. It is incredible to see what these skilled hands whip up in the mess tent each day after they've climbed with us. We certainly haven't gone hungry and it's pretty easy going to bed in three layers of clothing tucked in two sleeping bags on a full stomach.

I'll give you updates about the rest of the crew in tomorrow's progress report, and we'll have lots to report.

Today we've got between four and five hours of walking to make it to Camp Barafu just after lunch. Barafu is 4600m high. Then we rest up for several hours before heading out tonight at 11pm to tackle the summit.

That's going to be the supreme challenge. Six to nine hours of walking straight to the Uhuru Peak at a breathtaking 5895m above sea level. We are expecting a full moon, which will help as we walk through the night. When we get to the top, we're planting Humpty Dumpty flags and recording the moment for posterity. I can't wait.

I'm looking at the peak now and while it's not the top of the world, it's pretty close. Truly, the sight is unbelievable; you look at the clouds and you can actually see the shape of the Earth. No doubt about it, Kilimanjaro is just magnificent; it's bloody beautiful.

Wish us luck – we're almost there and this spectacular mountain is calling.

Join us again tomorrow at www.humptysmountain.com.au for another progress report.

Tutaonana.

*ASL – above sea level.