

DATELINE:

Report Millenium Camp, 3650m ASL, Mt Kilimanjaro

7a.m. Saturday August 7, 2010

FINAL Day, Kili Climb 2010

Report by Paul Francis, Humpty's founder and Executive Chairman



Un-bloody-believable. The 2010 Kili Club have done it – they made the Uhuru Peak at the highest point of Africa between 7am and 7.30am Mt Kilimanjaro time (overnight Sydney time) and there is no one who is happier than me. Okay, well, maybe Joe Hockey, who first came up with the idea to climb Kili to help Humpty help sick kids, but I'll get to Joe later.

My heart was in my mouth when Michele Rosengren from Adventure1000 called to share the good news; that every single one of the Kili Club who attempted the summit, made it in one piece. They are all exhausted and feeling the effects of a lack of oxygen but beyond that, they are in rude good health, and for that I am both enormously proud and enormously grateful.

I had a quick word to Cath Murray who spoke on behalf of her fellow climbers when she said: "Paul, this is one of the most challenging things that I have ever done and it's been well worth it. It's just fantastic". Cath and her daughter Airlie are the first mother daughter team to make the Kili summit.

Peter Campbell was a little bit more forthcoming than Cath. "It was the hardest physical activity I have ever undertaken – but it feels great the day after."

As Joe said to me earlier today when I passed on the good news of the successful second summit, "there are moments over the last week that I've felt like I've been back there with them". Mate, I couldn't agree more.

The 2010 team started their summit in two teams – the first heading off at 11pm with the second following at midnight. It took between seven and seven-and-a half-hours to make it to Uhuru Peak at 5896m ASL and I know with every molecule of my body what a huge effort that was. The challenges are enormous – both physically and mentally, and I'm not even going to start about the climate.

Before the climb, Peter Hillary and Jamling Tenzing – our guest lead climbers together with Peter's daughter Amelia – gave the team some tips, the most important of which, at least to me, was "get out there and do your best and embrace every minute of it". Those words ring so true and I reckon they apply to just about everything in your life.

Jane Flemming, a long-time Humpty Dumpty Foundation board member and great supporter who climbed with her husband Ian Purchas, drew on her days as a world-class athlete and gave her fellow climbers a bit of a pep talk before they left. On the eve of one of her Olympic races a sports psychologist sat her down and said: "If not now, when? If not you – who?" Sure enough, that inspired each of the 17 Kili Club members who started the summit ascent. They all made it.

Suffice to say that the wind was howling and the snow was falling when the Kili Clubbers broke camp for their night ascent.

I will let you in on a text that climber Tony Chamberlain sent his wife Melinda just before starting out for the summit: "At last night's briefing they handed out your letters. Thank you, they were great. I took them to the top of the mountain. It was like Masterchef. We were woken at 10:30. We had to put 5 layers of clothes on. We left camp at midnight. It was snowing, then we walked for kms and kms straight up the mountain. The air was so thin, everyone suffered. It was the most difficult thing

I've done and the rest of the team said the same thing. We couldn't stay on top of the mountain for too long. It was too cold and not enough oxygen. It was difficult to take a step."

The team spent about 10 minutes at the summit; with the sun coming up in the distance and the skies a shade of blue they'll never see anywhere else.

They took in the views and posed for photographs before starting their descent because they had to get down as quickly and safely as possible.

At Camp Barafu the Clubber had a well-earned brunch before a two-hour walk down to the Millennium camp, which is where I spoke to them. But it's not over. As Tony texted his wife at 1.29pm today: "Leaving camp for the last time. A four hour hike then a hot shower."

The 2010 team is now en route to the Mweka Gates where they can finally put their feet up, take a seat and be chauffeured back to the Arusha Hotel for a long awaited bath and the awards dinner tonight. The exhilaration of achievement and relief that the Kili Climb is over will be overwhelming.

I have mentioned in the past that climbing Kilimanjaro is not just about the eight days you spend on the mountain – it's about the preparation, the planning, the dedication and devotion to training and the immense – and I do mean immense – personal sacrifices that go in to all of that. Making the summit is not the only goal.

As many professional mountaineers have attested – including Hillary and Norgay – sometimes the vicissitudes of altitude sickness can fell even the most experienced climber in the same way that the most professional sailors will still go down with seasickness. That comes as no surprise to anyone. It is unavoidable despite the training and preparation. Sometimes, Mother Nature will have her way.

This year, Holly Brisley and Andrew Burnes had to retreat from Kili before making the final ascent due to altitude sickness. Andrew was on his second Kili Climb and Holly has already vowed to come back in 2011. Now that type of commitment is commendable.

"I am just so proud of the entire team – it's an unbelievable effort from everyone who participated," Joe Hockey told me while campaigning for the coming Federal election. "Not only have they all had a great experience which they will never forget and is, arguably, the experience of their life times, the outcome will benefit hundreds of children across Australia."

We talk about heroes all the time, and I am proud to say that the Humpty Dumpty Foundation has 19 newly minted heroes among the 2010 Kili Club. Having been to the top and back, I know what they have gone through and it is almost indescribable – the pain, the exhaustion, the challenge, the emotions that overcome you, the friendships you form, and the things you learn about yourself and what you can do. You learn to trust each other and rely on each other at really critical moments in your life (a bit like Humpty relying on all his supporters, really.)

Taking part in the Kili Climb rates among the most rewarding moments of your life. Scaling a mountain to reach the top of the highest free standing peak in Africa is not just about standing on top of the world – it's about feeling that you are on top of the world.

I want to thank each and every one of our Kili Clubbers for their amazing efforts this year and for raising close to \$1million to date. And I want to extend an equally heartfelt thanks to their families who have been left back in Australia, keeping the home fires burning. You have all made an



enormous contribution by donating your loved ones to Humpty and generously helping them make the journey – for that, I'm eternally grateful.

You know, since Humpty began more than two decades ago the foundation has raised \$25 million to buy equipment that has helped save the lives of sick and injured children around the country and in East Timor. The contribution of the 19 Kili Club members who climbed Kilimanjaro this year adds to that. What an awesome team. What an awesome achievement. What a bunch of bloody good eggs and rolled gold local heroes.



From the bottom on my heart, to the 2010 Kili Club, I want to say thank you and we all can't wait to give you a big hug when you make it back to Australia in just a few days.

2010 Kili Club Members:

- Graham Berman
- Holly Brisley
- Andrew Burnes
- Peter Campbell
- Tony Chamberlain
- Claire Driver
- Anton Goldman
- Alice Hocking
- Dean Kirkland
- Martin Kluckow
- Airlie Murray
- Catherine Murray
- Craig Neil
- Anatasia Papadopoulos
- Ian Purchas
- Jane Flemming
- Evan Smith
- Mike Suttor
- Nick Tobin