



They came, they climbed, they conquered

At 7.15am on August 6, the Humpty Dumpty Foundation made history – it conquered the Mt Kilimanjaro when a tight-knit team of 18 Good Eggs plus a five-man crew from Channel Seven completed the charity's inaugural Ultimate Burn.

Led by Federal Shadow Treasurer Joe Hockey and Humpty's founder Paul Francis, the six-day climb up (and down) the highest free-standing peak in Africa, the Humpty team raised \$1.35 million dollars.

"It an unprecedented fund-raiser for Humpty but it was more than that. It was a life-changing event for all of us," says Paul Francis. "And it was tough. We were all absolutely shattered. But we are so very happy to be so shattered.

"The climb was much harder than anyone imagined, even after spending the previous five days acclimatising to the altitude. Reaching the summit took a lot of sweat and tears; people were vomiting, people were hallucinating, people were hoping and praying to make it each step of the way. Equally though, it's also one of the most amazing things we've ever done."

Brian Freeman, the head of Adventure 35 who led the Humpty Kili Club up Kili told me "Sir Edmund Hillary would be proud of the efforts of the Humpty Dumpty climbing team."

Joe Hockey, who celebrated his 44th birthday on the mountain, said; "We spent six days climbing a mountain; the kids in hospitals climb a mountain every day."

Among the trekkers were 20-year-old Australian Paralympian sprinter and world record holder Kelly Cartwright, who was awarded the Sir Edmund Hillary award by Adventure35 for her courage and determination (see separate story) David Koch, co-host of Channel Seven's *Sunrise* program, and his son A.J. and son-in-law C.J. (aka Charitha Jayashinhe).

Others who climbed include some of the country's leading businessmen and women including **Joe Brown, Andrew Burnes** from Victoria, **Richard Gorman, Paul Fegan, Penny and Gary Gerstle, Chris Gray, Kevin Harrison** (another Victorian), **Andy Hurt, Mark Lochtenberg, Greg Perry**, paediatrician **Dr Jonny Taitz, Chad Walker, Steve Williams, Tedd Warden**, (also from Victoria) and **Barry Taitz** from South Africa.

Only four of the entire team who embarked on the journey together did not attempt the summit for health reasons after reaching various camps along the picturesque route.

The weather conditions varied from cold to sub-zero freezing but once the climbers had broken through the cloud line they were treated with clear blue skies and moon-filled nights.

A team of 132 porters, guides and cooks helped make the journey



less tortuous, particularly when they woke the climbers with a cup of tea in their sleeping bags followed by a breakfast banquet fit for kings and queens.

The final ascent began five nights later at 11pm on August 5. It took between eight and 10 hours and was the most physically challenging part of the climb due to the lack of oxygen at such extreme heights.

But the oxygen deprivation was no deterrent to the determined Kili Club.

When the first group reached the summit several Humpty flags planted in the Earth greeted them. The last group to claim the peak did so at 9.15am and quickly turned around to start their descent behind their euphoric but exhausted colleagues.

For all trekkers this was certainly an incredible challenge and one that none of them will ever forget.

Despite the enormous success of the inaugural Kili climb, Humpty will not tackle the mountain again. Next up is a new Ultimate Burn - another challenge that will be announced by seasoned adventurer Joe Hockey at the 2010 Balmoral Burn Sponsors' Dinner.

Stay tuned.

Each climber personally donated or raised at least \$50,000 for the charity.

