

*Editor's note: Hobby and Kear more or less climbed the same line as the Slovenians (reported above) to the base of the upper funnel. Here, they climbed up to the crest of the southeast ridge via a line approximately midway between that followed by the Slovenians in the spring and the more direct finish climbed by the Americans in 1984.*

*Cholatse, southwest ridge, winter attempt.* Ross Lynn and I spent three days on Cholatse (6,440m) from January 30 to February 1, 2006. On the first day we climbed from base camp to the ca. 5,550m col at the foot of the southwest ridge, at one point having to cross beneath seracs to avoid a technical crevassed section on the glacier. A final 180m slope of 70° ice led to the col, which we reached by 2:00 p.m. We spent one night camped on this col, preparing for a one-day summit mission on the 31st. We left the col at 6 a.m. Some 300m of mostly rock climbing up the first buttress put us at a more level section of ridge, above which we simul-climbed. We reached the point where the sun-cooked southwest ridge joins the south ridge at around 3 p.m. Here we stashed unnecessary gear and charged for the summit. Two hours into it we realized that we were not going to make it before dark. Close but no cigar! We estimated our elevation to be 6,400m. At 5 p.m., with a building cold wind, we started heading down.

Due to an unusually warm, dry winter, the upper ridge gave us more technical difficulty than anticipated. There were many open crevasses and short steps that ate up our daylight. From our high point we had to make two rappels before reaching our stash of gear. We continued rappelling into the night and finally regained our tent around midnight. We estimated the temperatures we experienced on the mountain as somewhere between -12 and -20°C. During the descent I wore all my layers, including a down jacket, and my feet were cold. In hindsight we realized that an earlier start would have considerably increased our chances of reaching the top.

On February 1 we woke feeling tired and descended to our base camp. A few technical mistakes cost us the summit, but we now have more tricks in the bag for next time.

WHIT MAGRO

*Tawoche, east-southeast face; Cholatse, direct finish to French Route; Ama Dablam, northwest face, attempt.* While hundreds of climbers were in the early stages of their wanderings up and down Everest, one Swiss, Ueli Steck, was totally alone on the east-southeast face of Tawoche. He went to the base of the northeast pillar of this 6,495m peak, but saw there was too much loose rock falling down the couloir of his intended approach, so he went around to the east-southeast face. At 11:30 p.m. on April 24 he started for the face from his base at 5,200m, reached the summit in 4½ hours, and was back at base camp by 8:00 a.m. An hour after his return to camp, snow avalanches started coming down the face. "I didn't pick the perfect route," he commented. "It was dark." He had stayed on the face throughout his climb, but he thinks the best route is probably one leading to the southeast summit and from there traversing to the left along the summit ridge to the highest point.

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*Editor's note: Steck's route on Tawoche climbed a left-slanting couloir/ramp on the far left side of the east-northeast face (sections of M5) to reach the big snow slopes that form the right side of the southeast face. These mainly consisted of 50-60° snow/ice, though in the upper section there were a few vertical ice steps through serac formations. He climbed the 1,200m line unroped.*