

His new line on the north face of 6,440m Cholatse is a direct finish to the 1995 French Route, finishing up the final section of the northeast face. He spent 37 hours on the climb, made one bivouac at 6,000m and compared the terrain to the north face of the Eiger, with rock to F5, ice to 90°, and M6 terrain.

On Ama Dablam he attempted to solo the third ascent of the Slovenian Route on the northwest face (Stane Belak-Srauf Memorial Route; ca. 1,600m, 5.7, AI 5, A2; Vanja Furlan-Tomaz Humar, 1996). He reached 5,900m, before retreating due to avalanche danger. Steck's account of his Khumbu adventures appears earlier in the journal.

Lobuje West, southwest face, Korean Direct. A six-man Korean team comprising Kang Sung-woo (leader), Ahn Chi-young, Gwon Jung-hyo, Lee Tae-gyun, Eddy Park-Jun, and I made the first ascent of 6,145m West Lobuje's southwest face on April 16. The weather was good throughout, except for one day's snowfall. We fixed rope to 5,790m, from which point we climbed continuously to the summit, leading on a 100m 8mm rope. We left various pieces of gear and 600m of rope on the middle section of the route.

Our route, Korean Direct, comprises three main sections. The first, led in rock-climbing

shoes and not affected by serious rockfall, climbed the right edge of a triangular rock buttress that terminated at 5,430m. We rated it no more than 5.8. The second, a 300m ridge scramble with moves up to 5.7, involved exposed climbing over precariously loose, car-sized boulders that offered sparse protection. The final section, above the point where rock ended and snow began, started at 5,640m and had crux pitches of WI4. Rumors of a Japanese attempt in 1995 are dubious, as to our knowledge there are no journal entries, and there was no trace of any climbing being done near base camp or on the wall itself.

We established base camp on March 31 at 5,080m and spent the next five days scouting, organizing gear, and fixing line from 5,100m to 5,474m. On April 10 Ahn, Park, and I fixed line to 5,540m and the following day extended this to 5,700m. On the day after that we refixed rope, and, hauling more rope, gear, and food from base camp, continued our preparation for a summit push.

On the 13th Ahn, Gwon, Park, and I bivouacked at 5,430m, but the next day Gwon was forced to retreat, due to typical miseries of AMS. Ahn and Park fixed the remaining designated rope up to 5,790m. Thirty meters below this high point we cut platforms before darkness quickly enveloped us. Despite the waist-width ledges, this was a good bivouac, with clear skies, no wind, and the distant glimmer of a Swiss soloist bivouacking high on the north face of Cholatse [Ueli Steck; see above—Ed.].



The ca. 900m southwest face of Lobuje West (6,145m), showing the line of the new Korean Route (27 pitches, 5.8 WI4). (1), (2) and (3) mark the bivouac or camp sites. The only known previous ascents have been from the opposite (east) side. *Peter Jensen-Choi*

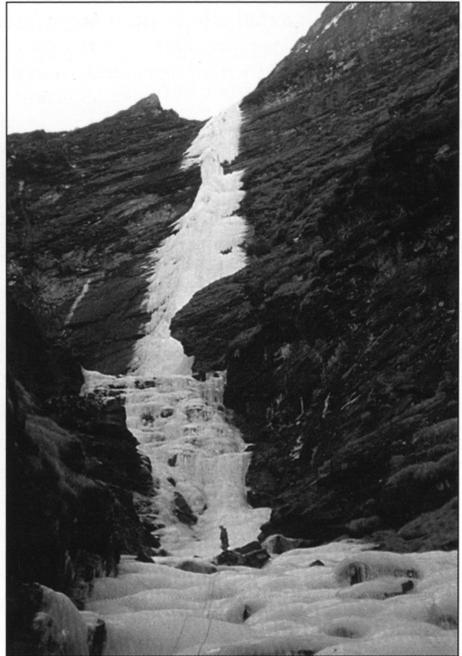
Our third day was equally slow, due to a relaxed start. The weather remained clear, and climbing commenced with me jugging up our fixed line and improving a mediocre anchor on an ice ridge. From there (5,790m) we climbed without fixed rope. Ahn pulled out a monster 90m lead along the right side of the ice ridge, and I finished with a 70m pitch up to the right of a large exposed granite slab, where we had originally anticipated finding a tent platform. There was none, and we spent the rest of the afternoon cutting a ledge at 5,900m, fixing safety lines, and cramming into the tiny two-man tent before night closed in.

On April 16 we were off by 6:15 a.m. with a few meager packets of dehydrated soup, nuts, and chocolate bars. This was our only chance of reaching the summit without starving the next day. I began by traversing left for 50m, then Ahn led directly up a steep ice gully to the top of an enormous snow terrace, just below and to the left of a building-sized cornice (WI4). Eddy led the second crux pitch (WI4), which led left of this large terrace and up the right side of a 50m+ steep granite headwall. I then traversed right and gained a gully of hard snow, rock, and ice, up which I climbed for more than 70m, placing mostly chocks and slinging horns. Ahn jugged the rope and led through, then finally Eddy reached the summit 50m above us. The time was 3:18 p.m. and we had climbed 27 pitches. [Base camp to summit was 1,000m, though the amount of climbing was estimated to be 1,300-1,400m—Ed.] Ahn and I followed and were able to straddle the saddle-like summit with our right legs on West Lobuje's northeast face and left legs down the southwest face. After taking pictures for 20 minutes, I led down, and we arrived back at our tent just as dusk blackened into night, our minds and hearts filled with the summit light.

PETER JENSEN-CHOI, *Corean Alpine Club*



The 700m Losar icefall, nestled into the north-facing hillside directly opposite Namche Bazar in the Khumbu. The first known ascent, in 1994, took three days but the route was soloed in just under six hours early in 2006. *Whit Magro*



Brady Robinson on low-angle terrain, approaching the 120m headwall of Losar icefall. The crux WI5 pillar is at the top of the climb. *Whit Magro*

Losar, ascent and possible future permit requirement. On January 10, 2006 Whit Magro and I climbed the stupendous frozen waterfall, Losar, which lies directly opposite Namche Bazaar. After 1½-hour approach, we took nine hours to reach the top, simul-climbing all but the last two crux pitches of the 700m route. The climbing was surprisingly moderate (WI3-4), with a little WI5 pillar at the top. We kept a steady, rather than frantic, pace and thoroughly enjoyed ourselves. It must be one of the greatest ice routes in the world. Over a dozen V-thread rappels got us back down in time for dinner in Namche.

We were in the region as volunteers for the Khumbu Climbing School, a program organized by the Alex Lowe Charitable Foundation (www.alexlowe.org), that strives to increase the safety of Nepali climbers and high-altitude workers through ice climbing, first aid, and English instruction. It seems that the only reason we got permission to climb the route was our affiliation with the ALCF. Jenni Lowe, President of ALCF, accompanied us to the park headquarters in Namche. After several hours of discussion and drafted letters, we received authorization. We learned that, shortly before our arrival, two Canadian climbers had been denied a go-ahead to climb the route, because they lacked a permit. Future parties should research the situation, as it may be that they will need a permit arranged and paid for prior to leaving Kathmandu.

On the 22nd Kris Erickson, Seth Hobby, and Renan Ozturk also climbed Losar. All three were affiliated with the ALCF and only received permission after protracted negotiations with park authorities.

BRADY ROBINSON

Editor's note: this icefall, which cuts through the north-facing pastures below Nupla (5,885m), had its first known ascent over three days in early 1994 by Catherine Destivelle and Erik Decamp, with photographer Beth Wald. They fixed ropes on the initial, thinly iced pitches.

Losar, solo ascent. Sometime after the ascent reported above and after I returned from an attempt on Cholatse's southwest ridge, I found myself back in Namche with a few days to spare. Losar allowed me to ascend and descend in just under six hours, by means of a leashless free solo.

WHIT MAGRO

Ama Dablam, Lagunak Ridge, attempt. Between October 1 and November 2, Tina Di Batista and I were members of a Slovenian Jubilee expedition to Ama Dablam. The expedition was organized to honor the 30th anniversary of the first Slovenian ascent of an 8,000m peak. In 1975 a Slovenian team (though in those days we were still Yugoslavia) climbed a new route on the south face of Makalu. Four of the seven Makalu summiters were on the 2005 Ama Dablam expedition, and all reached the top via the southwest ridge; Janko Azman, Janez Dovzan, Viki Groselj (expedition leader) and Marjan Manfreda. These four climbers were accompanied by Croatian Stipe Bozic, who was making a film.

Tina and I made an attempt on the Lagunak Ridge, which was climbed for the first time in 1985 by a Spanish-American trio, who completed the route using fixed ropes (this is the south ridge of Ama Dablam, which joins the Standard Route up the southwest ridge at ca. 6,500m—Ed.). We tried it in alpine-style. We started early in the morning of October 19. In the lower section we found fixed ropes along a rocky part of the ridge. We bivied below a