

*Manaslu, Northwest Face, Attempt.* On the great 8163-meter Manaslu, where six expeditions struggled unsuccessfully to scale the standard Northeast Face route this autumn, one pair of innovative Japanese mountaineers made the first attempt on its northwest face. After having spent nine days cutting through bamboo forest and constructing two small bridges to reach Base Camp, Yasushi Yamanoi and his wife Taeko were just at the early stage of their climb and had moved up the face to an altitude of 6200 meters with two bivouacs, when, on September 15, a large serac broke off above them and sent them rolling 100 meters down into deep snow, injuring both. "This route is dangerous," Yasushi Yamanoi said succinctly later. "There are many seracs. Maybe this route is not logical." They have no intention of returning to this face, despite the fact that it was not technically difficult.

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*"Bhrikuti," Ascent.* Identifying mountains in remote parts of Nepal is not always easy, as a Spanish post-monsoon expedition to Bhrikuti (6364m) in north-central Nepal learned. The few maps of the area that exist have many mistakes, and the local people whom the Spaniards asked about Bhrikuti pointed to different peaks. So Jesus Gonzalez and his three teammates, Jose Alonso, Manuel Caballero, and Alvaro Roldan, climbed one of these mountains, all of which were about 6300 meters high, on October 17 via the northeast face, though they now wonder whether they actually scaled an unnamed virgin peak instead.

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*Gyachung Kang, Attempts.* Two teams went to the 7952-meter Gyachung Kang, which stands on the Nepalese-Tibetan border between Cho Oyu and Everest, this autumn. It is very seldom attempted by climbers—probably partly because it is nearly 8000 meters high, but also because it is steep and difficult—and only three expeditions have ever gained the summit, all of them from its western slopes. This autumn's attempts by two parties of three Japanese and six Poles were made from the southeast, and they got no higher than 7000 meters. Like so many expeditions on the very high mountains in the post-monsoon, both were defeated by deep snow.

The Japanese, led by Takashi Shiro, aimed to go to the summit via the southeast ridge, but they stopped at 6700 meters, 100 meters below their final ridge, on October 11 while they were on a snow face of the south ridge, because they had run out of pickets. The Poles, under the leadership of Ludwik Wilczynski, managed to reach 7000 meters on a southeast pillar on October 3. They had climbed mostly at night because of the avalanching that warm daytime hours brought. But deep soft snow forced two members to spend 15 hours slowly plowing through it one day, and they were hit—but luckily not injured—by an avalanche. Their climb was abandoned after an important tent was covered by snow.

ELIZABETH HAWLEY

*All 14 8000-Meter Summits.* There were successes for three men approaching their goal of summiting all 14 8000-meter mountains, Fausto De Stefani and Hans Kammerlander of Italy on Kangchenjunga, and a Spanish Basque, Juanito Oiarzabal, on Dhaulagiri I.

Juanito Oiarzabal, a stickler for veracity amongst mountaineers who has blown the whistle on some errant ones, had a problem about the top of Dhaulagiri (8167m). On May 2, he came to an upright aluminium pole on the normal Northeast Ridge route very high on the

mountain. He had been told that this point was considered to be the summit and that numerous earlier climbers had claimed success on the basis of having reached it.

But for him this was not the true summit but about 50 meters lower; one can see more peaks, including the true top, beyond it, he says. He made another summit push, but was turned back by high winds. Only on May 22 did he get beyond the pole's area by a different line above 8100 meters and satisfy himself that he had really summited Dhaulagiri I. He has now "conquered" his 12th 8000er without bottled oxygen. With him to the top on the 22nd went two Basque brothers, Alberto and Felix Iñurategi, who have climbed all their 8000ers together (and also without bottled oxygen) and for whom Dhaulagiri was their ninth success.

An Italian who is getting close to summiting all the 8000ers is Hans Kammerlander. He was on Kangchenjunga this season and gained the summit of the 8586-meter giant on May 18 without artificial oxygen via the standard Southwest Face route with his teammate, Konrad Auer. But he said on his return to Kathmandu that he was not happy with this success, for the three weeks he spent on the mountain with three fixed camps along the route "is not my style. This is too slow." His toes became frostbitten while he waited for his companion to ascend his own first 8000er; "this [frostbite] is too high a price for a normal route." Now he was not able to go immediately to Manaslu, as he had planned, but had to have his toes cared for and wait until 1999 to scale this 8000er, when he hopes to climb K2 as well. That, he figures, will complete his "conquest" of all the 8000ers, although he has not reached the very highest peak of Shishapangma.

Fausto De Stefani, 46, now claims to have "conquered" all the 8000ers with his ascent of Kangchenjunga on May 15, despite the statement last autumn by his teammate on Lhotse that they did not actually reach that summit although they were "very, very near" it.

ELIZABETH HAWLEY

*Activity on the Nepalese 8000-ers in the Post-Monsoon.* This was a poor season on Nepal's 8000ers, even though all except one expedition attempted well-trodden routes. Seven expeditions went to Manaslu, four to Makalu, one each to Annapurna I and Kangchenjunga, and not one of them reached their summits. On Dhaulagiri I, there were seven teams and only one summited; nine teams went to Everest, but only two had success. On Lhotse's main summit, Tibetans were the only climbers, and they did succeed. A Russian team put four members on the summit of Lhotse Shar. So only five of the 21 expeditions that attempted to scale any peaks over 8000 meters within Nepal's boundaries were successful; that made an 84% failure rate, which is unprecedented in recent years. Autumn seasons normally see less success on the 8000ers than springs, but not nearly this much less.

On Nepal's only other 8000er, Cho Oyu, there were no attempts from the Nepalese side, but on the standard route from Tibet's side, there was striking success in notable contrast to the experience of teams on the 8000ers south of the border. Of the 22 Cho Oyu teams on what is probably the least difficult route on any 8000er, 19 put a total of 61 climbers on the top, 47 of them on just four days, the 24th, 26th and 27th of September and the 11th of October.

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*Mount Everest, Activity in the Pre-Monsoon Season.* The pre-monsoon season saw more people reach the top of Everest than ever before in a single season, and the total number of ascents ever made has now passed the 1,000 mark. Altogether 118 people managed to get to