

Members of the expedition: General leader: Kazuuki Abe (75); leader: Tamotsu Ohnishi (62); climbing leader: Satoshi Kimoto (48), and five climbing members. Academic party: Leader: Toyoji Wada (58) and one member.

*Editor's note: this route involved approximately nine pure rock pitches up to 5.10d, with a short section of A1 on the first. Fixed rope was used and a few bolts placed.*

TAMOTSU OHNISHI, *Japanese Alpine Club*

*Adapted from Japanese Alpine News, Tamotsu Nakamura, Editor*

## ROLWALING HIMAL

*Shishapangma main summit (8,027m), southwest face, solo in December with new variation.* Over the years I had a simple idea in mind: to climb a big Himalayan route solo in the inhospitable conditions that typify winter in the Himalaya. During all my outings in the Alps and from when I first encountered the high Himalayan summits, I wanted to attempt such a project. Since my start in alpinism I have had one central belief: "Things always seem impossible when you haven't tried them."

The idea is simple on paper but difficult to realize. Even with all my experience at high altitude, I was still full of uncertainty as I flew to Kathmandu. Would I be able to make the needed effort in the cold and rarified air? Would I be able to climb fast enough on such a technical face to get up between windstorms?

I arrived at base camp on November 14, acclimatized until December 8, and left advance base camp (5,700m) on December 9. That day I reached a bivouac at 7,000m. Then I rested on "stand by" mode, climbing only a mixed section of the British route of 1982 until 7,200m, where I bivouacked. I started climbing again at 4:30 a.m. on December 11 and reached the summit (8,027m) at 11:30, Nepalese time. Despite my elation, I had to concentrate on the cold that lived in my feet and my entire body, and on the descent that awaited me. Four hours later I bivouacked at 7,000m. Bad weather hit on the morning of December 12. All the mountains were consumed by heavy black clouds. It snowed intermittently and blew violently. Very tired, I concentrated hard, alternating between rappelling and downclimbing while descending the thousands of vertical meters that plunge to the glacier. Around 6,600m my 7mm rope got stuck; it is still on the route. Finally I regained the security of the glacier and reached base camp that day (December 12). My project ended as it had begun, in infinite solitude. I had proven that I was capable of climbing a grand Himalayan route under winter conditions, alone, with no support, and without artificial oxygen.

JEAN CHRISTOPHE LAFAILLE, *France (translated by John Harlin III)*

*Shishapangma, notes on the Lafaille ascent and winter season.* When the Nepalese Government established a winter season for the Nepal Himalaya lasting from December 1 to February 15, their rules also stated that while camps could be established above Base during November, they could not be occupied until the start of the following month. Jean Christophe Lafaille began fixing ropes up the first section of the Corredor Girona on November 20. Only 300m of rope were fixed in total

and on the following day he climbed to 6,500m and left some equipment before returning to Base.

He started up the face again on the 26th. Once clear of the fixed ropes he began to slant left up the great snow slope that lies between the Girona and British Routes. He camped the night at 6,500m and on the 27th more or less reached the British Route at 7,000m, having crossed the descent line used by Baxter-Jones, MacIntyre, and Scott in 1982, and the route climbed by Krzysztof Wielicki in 1993. Although Lafaille had hoped to install his top camp a little higher, he opted instead to erect his tent in a handily-placed crevasse. The following day he climbed 100m higher to establish a camp at an optimum height of 7,100m, then, with the wind forecasted to rise to 180km/hour at 8,000m, he descended to sit it out until the next break in the weather. All this took place prior to the start of December.

It is interesting to note that the first winter ascent of Dhaulagiri has been consistently credited to the Polish expedition that reached the summit on January 21, 1985. Japanese climbed the mountain on December 13, 1982 but their “winter” ascent was discounted as they had arrived at Base Camp in October with a post monsoon permit and did much work on the mountain during November.

LINDSAY GRIFFIN, *Mountain INFO*, CLIMB magazine

*Editor's note: The original press release about Jean Christophe Lafaille's ascent of Shishapangma called it the first winter ascent of the mountain. This generated considerable discussion in the climbing community because he had reached the summit on December 11. The permit called the season “winter,” however the calendar declared winter beginning 10 days later. Lafaille does not now report the climb as being “winter,” but instead calls it “winter conditions.” The following notes by Krzysztof Wielicki is being published not to refute claims by Lafaille, but to provide interesting commentary on the definition of winter ascents in the Himalaya. Wielicki, from Poland, has made more winter ascents of 8,000m peaks than anyone else—Everest, Kangchenjunga, Lhotse—and climbed a new route on the south face of Shishapangma. He wrote his comments not long after Lafaille's ascent. The first calendar winter ascent of Shishapangma took place on January 14, 2005 (see Simone Moro report, below).*

*Winter ascents of 8,000m peaks, commentary.* Katia Lafaille, wife of the renowned Jean Christophe Lafaille, recently reported about the excellent achievement of her husband on Shishapangma, which took place on December 11. Much to my surprise the information called it the first winter ascent of Shishapangma. But winter begins on December 21 in our hemisphere. There is a need to distinguish between the season written on a permit and the real nature of the winter season in the mountains. The first one is an administrative decision only. It is possible to make the real winter ascent while breaking administrative rules, for example on February 28, after the administrative date. Simply speaking: no clerk can determine the real season of the year.

The formal point of view: The Nepal Ministry of Tourism established December 1 as the beginning date for winter mountain action (here understood as the day of establishing Base Camp) and February 15 as the day when Base Camp should be left. This last condition was a mere administrative reason. As we were informed in 1979 (before the Polish Everest winter expedition) the choice of the middle of February as the end of the winter season came because Sherpas wanted enough time to rest before the beginning of the spring expeditions.

The climatic point of view: From my personal experience—and I have participated in seven winter expeditions to the Himalaya and Karakoram—stronger winds set in at the