



NORTH RIDGE OF LATOK 1
7150M KARAKORAM MOUNTAINS, PAKISTAN
2009 AMERICAN ATTEMPT
TRIP REPORT BY DYLAN JOHNSON

Despite 30 years of expeditions by many of the world's best alpinists, Pakistan's Choktoi Glacier maintains a 0.0% success rate on the magnificent objectives that are accessed there (Latok 3, Latok I, Latok 2, Ogre 2, Ogre I). The snowpack this year in the Karakorum was the biggest since 1976 according to the locals, which made glacier-travel easy and ridge-climbing difficult. Here is a report on the most recent Choktoi failure:

Funded in part by a Mugs Stump Award, Josh Wharton (with his fiancé Erinn Kelly who would stay in base camp), Colin Haley and I left the States on 9 June to attempt the North Ridge of Latok 1 in Pakistan's Karakorum. After a week of traveling through Islamabad, Skardu and the four day trek up the Braldu and Panmah river valleys, we arrived at base camp on the upper Choktoi Glacier at 4560m, below the North Ridge.

We completed three acclimatization trips on nearby ridges and peaks. First we spent one night at 5000m on a ridge immediately above base camp. Our second trip involved three days retrieving Colin's gear cache at 5700m at the Ogre/Ogre II col, left behind during his 2008 attempt on the Southeast Buttress of the Ogre with Maxime Turgeon. Our third and final acclimatization mission took us to the summit of the High Sister at 5800m and an adjacent high glacial plateau where we spent two nights at 5850m.

At midnight on 8 July, with a forecast for three good days followed by a minor 24 hour storm, we started toward the base of the north ridge with three 32 pound packs. Our intended line climbed snow and ice on the east side of the ridge, intersecting the ridge at 6000m above the lower sections of heavily corniced and mushroomed ridge. We reached the base of the technical climbing at dawn and began belaying a 250m water ice step. Colin led the first block of grade 3 and 4 ice topping out on steep snow at 5450m. I led the following block of 60 degree snow and ice to the base of a steep mixed step at 5750m where Josh would take over. Our intended line continued up the steep mixed terrain above, which looked reasonable from base camp, but now appeared exceedingly difficult. We opted to climb a climb short mixed pitch followed by an arduous snow pitch (courtesy Colin, our unconsolidated snow master) to reach the ridge and a bivi near 5830m.

After stamping out a platform on the narrow double-corniced ridge we discussed our options. The ridge itself was impassable due to the sugary mushrooms and cornices, our only option for ascent was to traverse west off the ridge. From his 2008 attempt, Josh knew the terrain to the west was complex and difficult as well. We decided the climbing was too slow and difficult and the chances of summiting were too slim to justify continuing. We rappelled the lower northwest face the following day and returned to base camp and called in the porters. On our trek out from base camp, we met the Spanish alpinists, Alvaro Novellon and Oscar Perez hiking in to attempt the North ridge as well. May they have better luck than we did *inshallah!*

We would like to extend our sincere gratitude to the Mugs Stump grant program for their generous support of our expedition. And I would personally like to thank my sponsors Arcteryx, Adidas Eyewear, Black Diamond, Raw Revolution, Thermarest, MSR and Mountain House for providing the finest gear available.



Dylan bouldering on the trek into base camp. Photo: Erinn.



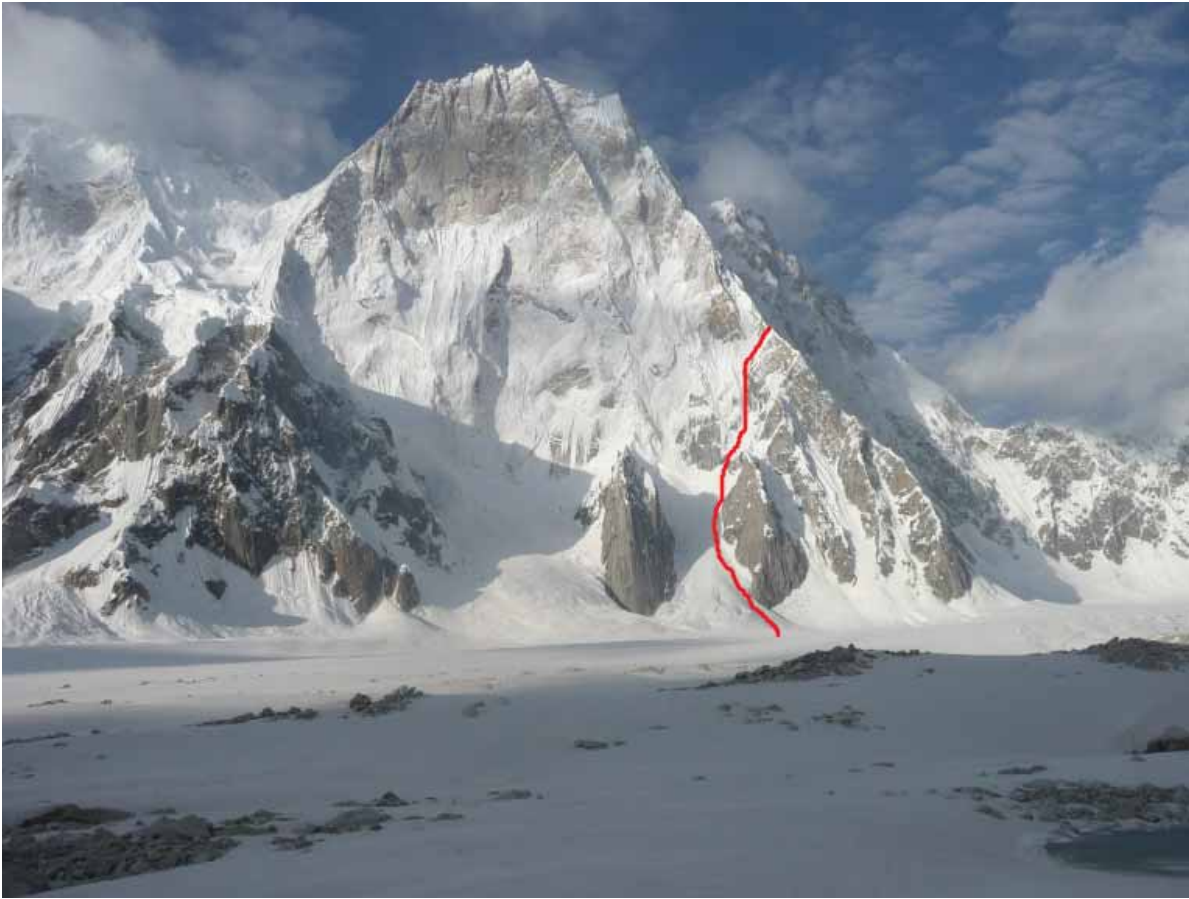
Balti porters hand carrying chickens for four days to base camp. Photo: Dylan



Trekking on the Choktoi. Photo: Dylan.



Base camp with Latok 1 behind. Photo: Dylan.



Our route and high point at 5830m; 1300m up the 2600m North Ridge. Photo: Dylan.



The upper north ridge. Photo: Dylan.



Dylan and Josh on an acclimatization trip. Photo: Colin.



Dylan and Josh nearing the summit of the High Sister. Photo: Colin.



Dylan and Josh on the North Ridge at dawn. Photo: Colin.



Dylan topping out the waterfall section. Photo: Colin.



Josh following on the North Ridge. Photo: Colin.



Dylan leading toward the ridge crest. Photo: Colin.



Colin at our high point, OGRE I and II in the background. Photo: Dylan.