

David's climb on track

Intrepid mountain climber, David Cole is still on track with his goal to stand on the summit of Mt Everest some time this month.

All teams have recently been under communication restrictions in the lead up to the Olympic torch being carried to the summit, with a military presence at base camp and camp two.

"I spent a few days at camp one, feeling a lot better for it, and returning up the ice fall with the Sherpas, leaving at 3.30 am and arriving at camp one at 8 am; a lot faster than the first time up the ice fall, which was a good sign of moving more efficiently at the higher altitudes," David said.

"Camp two is located on rocky terrain on the edge of the glacier and sits at the foot of Everest's 2200 metre south west face.

"From camp two the summit itself is now clearly visible, looming high above us, but at least now it seems within striking distance."

David said getting that far has been both physically and mentally draining, but with each descent and re-ascent team members feel stronger in both capacities for the hard effort required in the final summit push.

About a further two hours on from camp two the Lhotse face was clearly visible.

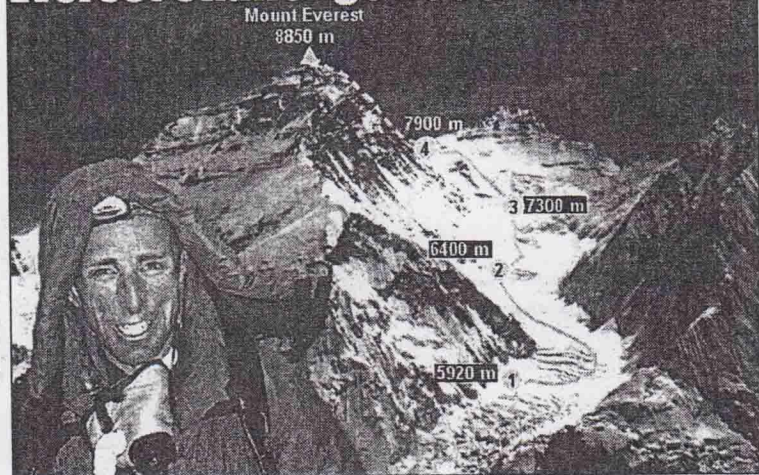
David said it looks most intimidating — a 400 m ascent in hard ice of 50 to 60°.

"It is part way up the Lhotse face at 7300 m above the yellow rock band that camp three will be precariously perched," David explained.

He said conditions at camp two are marginally better than at camp one.

"We have a basic kitchen set up, with food typically consisting of

Everest Challenge 2008 - David Cole



chapatis, cereals, eggs and lots of noodle soup and pasta."

After spending three to five nights at camp two, the team returned to base camp on Wednesday to rest and recover before pushing back up the route again.

"Numerous team members, including myself, have developed a constant coughing, known as the Khumbu Cough, which results from breathing cold, dry air and the agitation this puts on the throat.

"The next few days will be critical for overcoming this ailment as best as possible."

David said there is a small weather window in which the Chinese may summit Everest with the torch.

"Everyone is hoping this will happen.

"The past couple of days there has been a small jet flying around the Everest summit, which we suspect is the Chinese."

David said a tropical cyclone is coming up from the Bay of Bengal

and is expected to bring snowfall and high winds until about May 9.

"After May 9 the weather forecast suggests near windless conditions for a number of days, creating, what looks at this time, to be favourable summit conditions."

David intended to descend on Friday on a five hour hike to Dingboche for a couple of nights, "to recharge ourselves on the lower altitude, and also rebuild our energy reserves with a good food intake, and for myself to try and shake the Khumbu Cough."

He would then return to base camp to rejoin the team and make the ascent back up to camp one and two, for what could well be either a slow, final summit push around May 9, or a push up to touch camp three, descend back to base camp for rest and recovery, and then make a final summit push later in the month.

"It all really depends now on how quickly the Chinese summit, and how the weather situation unfolds," David said.