

KILIMANJARO SEPT 14TH - 21ST 2004

I have to confess that ive been counting the days until i departed for Africa. I have been so stressed out here in London with trying to finalise sponsorship, do interviews and organise the logistics with Guy Cotter on the remaining five mountains i feel completely exhausted. I dont think ive worked so hard at anything before and im longing for the peace and quiet of being on a mountain! If i want to get my daily one hours exercise in, i need to be up at 6.00am so i can maximise the hours in a day to get things done. I didnt even get up this early when i was a director of FPD Savills in HK! Some days ive been skipping the run because im so tired.

Somehow im packed and vaguely organised and sitting on the plane waiting to take off to Nairobi. British Airways have kindly sponsored me 2 long haul trips as their contribution towards my 7 summit challenge.. After some of the dodgy flights iv taken in remote places i just love sitting on British Airways and feel a lot more secure - i hate flying despite my monumental flying schedule, i get really nervous and often end up clutching the poor unsuspecting person next to me when we go through areas of turbulence! I have been told by one guy to remove my hands and nails from his arm - i thought men liked damsals in distress but apparently not!

As soon as we land in Nairobi we are connecting straight onto a small propellar plane that will take us to Kilimanjaro where we will quickly shower and change and get straight onto the mountain to walk 4 hours to our first camp.

Im flying with my great girlfriend Kat Pooley and her husband Rob whom will be climbing with me and Guy Cotter. I feel awful when i heard Kat was climbing Kili, i was so excited about climbing with her that i booked Guy and i onto the same trip. I have just found out that they are celebrating their wedding anniversary which we are now crashing!

Guy Cotter is meeting us at Kilimanjaro as he flew in from New Zealand yesterday, about 2 days of travel to get to our meeting point! I plan to always have either Guy or Luis climb with me on the next 6 mountains. Luis is taking me to Vinson and Aconcagua in November. I havent seen Guy since Everest but hes been really fantastic helping me put this all together with the help of the indispensable Suze and Kelly who are so organised - a calming influence on my chaos!

I have never been to Africa before and im so excited to go and explore a new continent for the first time. My mother was born in Uganda so it will be nice to at least have been to the continent that she was born in and exposed to new cultures.

We are about to take off now so im going to sign off here and try and get some rest before i end up not being able to make the 5 hour walk in that we are meant to be doing tomorrow! Good night from BA 089!!

15th SEPTEMBER

We arrived after a fairly uneventful but slightly bumpy flight ( apparently its always bumpy flying over Africa) Nairobi was surprisingly cold 14 degrees and overcast which made me apprehensive about the small propeller flight. We went straight over to the domestic airport, i could see evidence of my friends greg and tony Benetars signage company all over the airport..wasnt really sure what they did before but now i do!

We went to Kenya Air to check in for the domestic flight to Kilimanjaro and our first problem became immediately apparent. They had only brought in a 17 seater plane and there were about 50 people with a confirmed seat on the flight. We were informed that we would be flying first to Zanzibar, wait aboard the plane and then fly onto Kilimanjaro - only a mere 4 hours flying out of our way! Given that we were meant to walk to our first camp on the mountain today there was no way this was going to happen. Kat, who was feeling ill and like she was coming down with flu, slept on a bench, i read Hello, and we delegated Rob to go and sort out the problem. After about an hour of negotiation Rob had managed to get us onto the direct flight which was a great relief.

As we waited to board the plane an english girl came and joined us and informed us how terrifyingly bumpy this flight was when she flew down here 4 months previously due to the hot thermals near kilimanjaro airport! I turned white and immediately took a xanax which i normally try not to take. It was my 2nd ever xanax but i do get especially nervous on propeller planes after our plane disaster down in Fiji in 2001. The plane was similar to the one i flew to Lukla and by this time i was zoned out and in another world as we took off for kilimanjaro. I could hardly keep my eyes open and didnt even cry at the turbulence upon landing which actually after all the warnings from the english girl wasnt that bad. The bad news now was that i was feeling really tired and not like a 5 hr walk!!

We met up with Guy at the airport and it was great to see him and we went back to the hotel for a bite to eat and to get ready for the walk to the first camp. Still chewing our lunch we were rushed to the van to get a move on before they closed the gates at 2.00pm. Our driver drove like a bat out of hell and we made the gate in record time despite being thrown around the van!

We all signed the register and began the 5 hour walk through the jungle to the Machame hut. Guy did some filming en route and i have to confess my legs felt like jelly as we walked in through the dense tropical rain forest. I chatted with Guy and our guide Arnold on the way up as Kat and Rob had gone on ahead. It was dark by the time we showed up and i was absolutely starving. Our tents were all ready for when we arrived - such a luxury to have it done for you!! I got unpacked and then into kats tent and ate all her flapjacks.

We have just had a delicious supper, ive been really impressed by the food so far ( only one meal i know but...) Im so tired i can hardly write my diary so im off to sleep, im happy to be in my sleeping bag!!

#### SHIRA CAMP 16TH SEPTEMBER 12,450 FT

Had my first 10 hour sleep for ages and woke up feeling like a new person. Its nice when you are camping and wake up in normal temperatures as opposed to frost dripping down onto you from the roof of the tent. kat has woken up and is feeling really ill with flu, not good news. She is opening an interiors shop on Walton Street on 20th October so has been as stressed and crazy as i have been so it looks like she is just completely run down. I hope she will be ok for the climb.

We had a great breakfast, porridge, eggs and toast and packed up ready to walk to the next camp some 800 metres higher. The walk started with the jungle type vegetation, we were ensconsed in mist and it looked a little eerie as i commenced our walk upwards for the day. As we climbed above the cloud/mist level the vegetation became much more barren and indicative of the volcanic activity that once took place on this mountain. The sun had burnt through the clouds and was now fiercely strong and i quickly applied my SPF 60 to my face and neck as the heat engulfed us for the next couple of hours until we took a break for lunch. kat was resting on a rock and still not feeling great when i showed up with Arnold and Guy. We had been doing some filming on the way up and generally just taking our time, we didnt exactly have a very long day today and i was just starting to unwind from city life and enjoying it!

We continued up to our 2nd camp at a place called Shira and we are most definately not alone at this campsite although it dosent feel too overcrowded...We had a lazy afternoon lying in the sun and im starting to get some very odd tan marks with hand prints on my skin depicting the carelessness with which iv applied my sunblock - not a good look. Dinner is at 6.00pm so that we can all try and get a good nights sleep. Its so beautiful looking out of my tent and seeing the hugely impressive mass of kilimanjaro with its snowcapped top. It feels like we have a long way to go up from here! Im signing off for today as yet again im starving and off to have dinner.

#### 17TH SEPTEMBER - BARRANCO 3,900,M

We were awoken at 7.30am and i had another great sleep and am now feeling fully invigourated from the effects of city life. Kat was feeling really bad this morning, very tearful and fluey and thinking about going back.. I was hoping this was just her feeling bad in the morning and that she would continue to give it a go which is what she decided to do having had breakfast. We then started to walk to Barranco at about 9.30am. It was a

slow, gently undulating walk amongst lots of volcanic rock and it was boiling hot as we started out. This all changed about half an hour into our hike when the clouds rolled up the valley and the temperature dropped dramatically within minutes as it always does in the mountains and i was soon adding layer after layer of clothing to keep warm. We headed up to Lava rocks at 4,600metres where we took a break for lunch. I saw the Arrow Glacier route which led steeply upwards from Lava Rocks and i really wish i could have done this route - this was the route that my South African friends Greg and Tony Benetar had advised that i take but it was not my trip to make that decision. It was freezing cold at lunch and as i had not put my gloves into my pack when i left camp in the basking sunshine of the morning, a big mistake, my hands were really cold. Kat very kindly lent me a glove and i had the right glove and she wore the left glove - spot the blondes in the mountains! I have damaged the tissue at the end of my fingers from a training climb down in Chile just prior to Everest when i lost the feeling in my hands for 2 weeks.. all rather scarey but i was assured this was frost nip and not frost bite! Either way nip or bite, my hands are something i really need to be careful with when im climbing. I wolfed down lunch shivering with cold and thought about the misconception that kilimanjaro would be a warm climb due to its proximity to the equator.. to the contrary it has really been surprisingly cold.

After lunch we dropped down 600metres which is something i hate to do as i you always know that you have to climb back up it at somepoint! We arrived at Barranco at 3.00pm - its a sheltered camp that lies below the spectacular cliffs of the Breach wall and the Haim Glacier and is really a stunning location. We are on a sheltered plateau with this amazing scenery and to add to my delight and everyones dismay i got a reception on my cell phone! Normally when im on a mountain climb i can kiss the thought of using my cell phone goodbye so i was escatic when it worked and i picked up a bunch of messages and text messages from friends asking whether id made the summit yet!! I mean i know peoples expectations are scarily high of my ability right now but to make the summit of Kili in 2 days was definattely not going to happen! I busied myself being social for a while and then joined kat, Guy and Rob for tea and lots of Kats chocolate biscuits - thank god i brought my medium size trousers or i dont think id be fitting into my small ones right now! Im now chilling in my tent with Guy who is trying not to fall asleep as im yattering away to him! Dinner is soon and im going to have to undo a button to take on more food!! Another early night its so great all this sleep im getting!!

18TH SEPTEMBER BARRANCO - KARRANGA 4,200metres

We were woken up at 8.00am, its an easy day today again so we were allowed to lie in which i love! I had been awake in the night for about 2 hours for some reason and ended up listening to Keane on my walkman until i finally drifted back to sleep.

It was sunny but still a little chilly this morning and kat was feeling worse. Her flu had gone to her chest and she was coughing a lot during the night although probably due to

listening to keene at some ungodly hour i was blissfully ignorant to her coughing away in the next door tent.

We had breakfast at 9.30am and started walking to Karrango. Our path took us steeply up the barranco wall, i have to confess to thinking it was about time we started putting in some serious vertical, it was 600 metres up and Guy and i got a lot of filming done. We arrived at the top on the barranco wall to see a spectacular view of Mt Meru appearing above the clouds in the distance. We then descended unfortunately and began an undulating walk for about an hour where we arrived at the top of a hill and could see across the valley to our campsite situated on a slope the other side. I have to say, not that its hindered my sleep in any way, that i have not yet had a flat surface to sleep on! Each morning I wake up and my legs are pushing the bottom of the tent outwards and im always scrunched up about half way down the tent.

The poor porters have to bring our water up from the bottom of the hill, not an easy feat given the weight and the fact that they carry it on their heads! I was going to wash my hair but i now feel way too guilty at the extravagance so am sticking with the attractive greasy look in preparation for my Vinson climb where im going to be unable to wash my hair for 3 weeks due to the frigid conditions. We have just had a big lunch of chicken and french fries and im about to take a siesta. Rob and Guy are chatting in the mess tent and kat is coughing next door!

I fell into a deep sleep and woke at 5.30pm feeling wide awake ( not good when ur due to sleep again at 8.00pm!) We had dinner and then watched the sunset which was so beautiful. Kat and i then decided to call our friend Tania to find out what was going on in the world! We tracked tania down on a beach in Barbados, talking about being in a different world to us right now!! We then took a bunch of photos and headed to our tents for the night. Needless to say sleep completely eluded me and finally at around midnight i fell into a restless sleep curled up half way down the tent!

19TH SEPTEMBER - BARRAFU HUT 4,600M

I woke up before our designated wake up time of 8.00am and felt that this was a good indicator im no longer sleep deprived! We had a nice leisurely breakfast, kat has brought marmite with her which i was very pleased about! At about 9.30am i started walking at a pretty good pace up towards our next camp listening to my music and completely in my own little world. It was a pretty easy walk with a slight incline as we approached Barrafu. The weather was pretty socked in, we were engulfed in mist and cloud and it was starting to hail. Once at Barrafu i started getting everything organised for our midnight departure to try for the summit. You want to have enough spare clothes in case the weather is really cold. Its now really just a waiting game. I never like to underestimate a summit day and i always have that familiar adrenalin rush prior to leaving which i think is a good thing.

Im in my tent and Guy has somehow managed to be sleep ( im so jealous!) and we are having dinner at 5pm before resting until we are woken up at 11.00pm to get ready to go! Its Kats brothers anniversary today, he was unfortunately killed in Belize a few years back, and its especially poignant to her as they climbed kili together years ago. I know he has been on her mind a lot today.

I hope that the hail stops before we leave for our hike to the summit, nothing worse than having hail stones constantly smacking you in the face. I tried to get some sleep but to no avail, we had 3 really noisy girls camped right next door... i know it might appear like the pot calling the kettle black, but these girls make me look quiet and im also quite considerate when camping ( i think!) Soon we were told to start getting ready to go when Arnold came to our tent at 11.45pm.

## 20TH SEPTEMBER - SUMMIT DAY

I got ready fairly quickly and we were all ready to go by 12.30pm. It was pretty cold outside but the hail had gone and it was a clear starry night as we started following the trail through the volcanic rocks and out of the camp. We all trapsed in a line after Arnold who having been pacing us nice and slowly up to barrafu hut suddenly headed off at quite a clip. Its never really a good idea to break into a sweat when ur in these frigid temperatures as inevitably once you have cooled down you become really cold and wet too. I was just starting to break into a slight sweat when Guy told him to slow it down a little ( thank god) i didnt want to say anything!! It was absolutely freezing cold and suddenly i developed a searing pain in the right hand side of my stomach. It was so painful walking and i have no idea what could have caused it but my mind was thinking the worst, appendasitus or something like that. I kept going and tried not to think about the pain as we continued upwards into the frigid night.. Kilimanjaro has been way colder than i had imagined, that is the one thing that will stick out in my mind about this mountain.

The pains continued but i was focused right now on getting to the top and i clenched my stomach muscles to try and dull the pain. The fact that my sister lucy had climbed kilimanjaro 3 years previously was enough incentive to keep me going, i could just imagine if i didnt do this, her constantly reminding me she had done it and that she is only one of the seven summits behind me!! albeit a rather big summit behind me!!! good old healthy sisterly competition!

We pushed on upwards, its a lot of vertical on summit day 1,200metres but everyone was in good shape and spirits and we continued climbing through the night. At around 5.15am we arrived on the summit of kili having overtaken most of the other groups on the way up. The summit was pretty dark and only a faint streak of dawn on the horizon - this was not the plan to arrive in darkness i hasten to add, i wanted the panoramic views behind my sponsors flags! A bit of a screw up on our departure time i think! You could see the impressive Haim Glacier to the right, it looked almost majestic in the early light of dawn.

I took my summit photos with my sponsors flags, it was so unbelievably cold and i could feel my hands go completely numb as were my feet by now too. After taking the photos and shooting some film footage with Guy by which time the camera froze we started to head down. My camera which was meant to capture the summit moment for my sponsors completely froze which caused me to be severely irritated as it was a brand new camera. My pains had subsided by now thank goodness and as daybreak came we were headed back down the mountain passing people walking painfully slowly towards the summit. The altitude on this mountain is hard to deal with as you are going pretty high very quickly so it can be a tough climb to deal with this.

We descended very fast and i was back in camp just over an hour later with some very sore toenails which i had forgotten to trim back. My pedicured toenails with my summer pink nailvarnish were now a bit of a mess! Since competing in the Machlehole Trail in Hong Kong, a 63mile mountain marathan with some 23,000ft of vertical, i have had problems with my toenails due to the constant pounding they endure on the downhill sections. After one race i was missing 7 toenails ( really attractive!) so it was no surprise that they were starting to hurt me now and i was cursing myself for my ignorance in forgetting to cut them.

Once we were all back at camp we had a big breakfast and then we all took an hours nap before starting to walk down to our camp for the night - our last campsite before walking out. We were about 20 minutes out of camp when we made a universal decision, well guy encouraged my idea to try and spend the night back at the hotel!!, to try and walk the whole way out which would take us about 5 hours. The thought of sleeping on a flat surface in a bed, as opposed to half way down a sloping tent was getting me fired up to walk out!! The hot shower was prevalent in all our minds as we started run/walking down the mountain leaving the amazingly accomodating Arnold frantically changing logistics on his cell phone - the wonders of modern technology! We had lunch at our intended overnight spot and then continued down into the jungle for the final 2 hours to the gates. It was now boiling hot and my feet were almost crippled, each step was like having knives stabbed in all ur toes simulataneously. I hobbled downwards as fast as i could gritting my teeth and thinking about washing my hair. The ground was a rich red soil and the jungle was a little busier this time than when we trekked in and there were monkeys swinging above us in the trees. wouldnt have minded swinging down myself at this point i have to say!

Finally at about 4.30pm we arrived at the gate. Apart from our one hour siesta we had pretty much been on the move now for 16 hours and not only ascended nearly 4,000ft of vertical but we had descended 14,500ft so it had really been quite a day all told!! At the gate we signed the register and then i found out that we had to walk another 25 minutes as the bus could not make it up the hill to where we were currently located. psychologically that 25 minutes was worse to me than the 14,000ft i had just come down and my feet were intensley painful. I hobbled down into the town and finally we came to where we were going to wait for the bus. I ordered a coca cola and we all sat down to wait. 2 hours later still no bus.. I had talked my cell phone out of battery at this point and my mood was getting progressively worse, however given that i had instigated this idea

of getting to our hotel room tonight i thought i would keep upbeat about it all! Finally the land rover showed up with a trailer to take all our duffell bags and kat and i jumped in and waited to leave!! We arrived back at the hotel at 9.30pm, we were all exhausted and smelly but decided to have dinner prior to the shower! We had a quiet dinner and all went to our rooms where i fuffed around until about 1.00am sorting out my climbing gear and finally having a well earned shower.. one of my friends is starting to call me soap dodger so i thought id better not keep that name!! It was blissfull lying in a flat bed, but my toes were in such bad shape that even the sheets hurt my feet! I could feel this overwhelming stiffness enveloping my whole body and i just knew it would be impossible to walk properly tomorrow having descended that much vertical in one day! Putting aches and pains aside i fell into a deep deep sleep so happy that i had made the summit of one more mountain, one step closer to my goal!