

He's King of the Hills

Speed climbing's rising star, Chad Kellogg, an endurance wonder who runs up mountains, sets his sights on the world's second-highest peak, K2

By Christopher Solomon

SI Adventure What have *you* got planned for the summer? Chad Kellogg is on his way to Pakistan, where he intends to undertake a solo Alpine-style climb of 28,250-foot K2. For anyone else such an assault on the second-highest -- and arguably most dangerous -- mountain in the world would seem reckless at best. For the 33-year-old Kellogg, however, it's merely the next step in what is becoming an extraordinary career.

Kellogg first sent a ripple through the mountaineering community last summer when he won the international speed-climbing competition on 23,100-foot Khan Tengri on the Kazakhstan-Kyrgyzstan border -- racing at an elevation that can cause lung failure. Two days after the race, annoyed that storms and high winds had forced the race's turnaround point to be positioned 1,600 feet short of the top, he skipped the trophy ceremony to touch the summit by himself.

Kellogg's training had been equally impressive. As a final prep for the Khan Tengri race, he headed out from a landing strip 13,000 feet below the summit of Alaska's 20,320-foot Mount McKinley and used skis, running shoes strapped to lightweight crampons, and climbing boots to reach the top in 14 hours, 22 minutes, scorching the old record by four hours. Kellogg was back at the landing strip in a hair under 24 hours, another record. In all Kellogg climbed to the summit three times in five days.



A snowboarder and former luge racer, Kellogg now concentrates on the uphill. Rich Frishman

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"The rules of physical exertion and mental stamina, they're just different for Chad," says Mike Gauthier, the supervisory climbing ranger at Mount Rainier National Park. "He might be cold, his feet might hurt, he might be tired -- but he just keeps pushing on, like a machine."

Kellogg first tried climbing as a 13-year-old in Seattle and continued to climb during an eight-year detour as a luge racer (during which time he nearly made the 1992 U.S. Olympic team). He was later a sponsored snowboarder. By the mid-'90s Kellogg was a self-described "climbing bum," scaling big walls in Yosemite and living in a cave. His mountain-goat speed and toughness truly kicked in when he worked as a climbing ranger on Mount Rainier in the late '90s. He has climbed that 14,410-foot volcano 69 times and holds the speed record -- just under 5:06 to the summit register and back, 9,000 feet each way. He eats, drinks and even urinates on the run.

"I really love to climb the mountains in one continuous effort from bottom to top," he says. "Speed is always secondary." But Kellogg also concedes that when he picks a challenge, he doesn't waver.

"He rebuilt an entire house in a month," says his wife, Lara, a part-time mountaineering guide. "Climbing is the same way. Everything else is turned off."

Kellogg will warm up for his K2 expedition with a solo climb of 26,400-foot Broad Peak in the Karakoram Range. Then it's across the valley to K2. After using porters to help transport gear to a base camp at 16,400 feet, Kellogg plans a solo push for the summit without supplemental oxygen.

After that? "I'd love," says Kellogg, "to try a one-day round-trip summit of Everest."

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