



VACHERON CONSTANTIN  
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June 2019 – With already two ascents of the roof of the world to his credit, Cory Richards has just wrapped up a new Everest expedition, with the Ecuadorian Esteban “Topo” Mena, this time via one of the most difficult routes and without any oxygen supply. The extremely harsh and exhausting weather conditions did not allow him to complete his journey, which means postponing the challenge until later.

Vacheron Constantin wishes to pay tribute to the courage and strength of this extraordinary personality who is undoubtedly “one of not many”.

Reaching the roof of the world at an altitude of 8,848 metres / 29,000 feet remains an outstanding performance. Since May 29<sup>th</sup> 1953, when pioneers Edmund Hillary and Sherpa Tensing Norgay first summited Everest, less than a third of the climbers having taken on the challenge have actually conquered the Himalayan giant. And among them, only 2% have done so without respiratory assistance. Cory Richards is one of them. His first two ascents on 2012 and 2016 – including one without oxygen in 2016 – gave him a taste for adventure and for a fresh challenge that he knew would require pushing his own limits: climbing Everest via the North-East ridge, located in Tibet, considered the most difficult and dangerous of all.

This human adventure, which began ten months ago with stringent physical and mental preparation, as punctuated by long phases of acclimatisation, waiting for favourable weather windows and long, very slow hikes. Going from usual atmospheric pressure (1 atm) to that found at an altitude of 8,000 metres / 26,245 feet (0.32 atm); suffering potential impacts during the ascent; as well as experiencing thermal shocks at temperatures reaching -40°C / -40°F: such were the constraints, risks and challenges to which the mountaineer and his watch had to adapt, as nature asserted its authority through imposing particularly extreme conditions on the mountaineers.

The ultimate phase of Cory’s and Esteban ascent was marked by a 40-hour stint out of base camp that ended with Cory having to turn back at 7,600 metres (24,934 feet) because of extreme weather conditions. After pushing for 12 hours on the first day, Cory ended up taking refuge in an ill-advised open bivouac at 7,300 metres (23,950 feet) where he could not rest due to the very cold temperatures. The next morning, he decided to continue his ascent despite the lack of sleep and physical exhaustion. After three hours of climbing in mixed terrain and knowing how far he still had to go, he chose to turn back and wait for a more favourable weather window. Unfortunately, a second suitable weather window did not materialise for Cory, who therefore decided to leave the mountain for this year.

The next 12 months will doubtless be spent fine-tuning preparations for a new expedition to the top of the world.



*“A year worth of work came to an end. I join scores of other expeditions and routes that have taken multiple seasons to complete and start the process to return next season to try again! Disappointing? For sure. Realistic? Totally. Only 12 months to be better, stronger, more refined, and more dialed! Thanks Everest for keeping it very real this season!”*

– Cory Richards

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