



Lee Farmer before his expedition to climb the world's tallest mountain

Lee – a man on top of the world

MOUNTAINEER Lee Farmer has conquered Mount Everest a little under two months after setting out on his Himalayan expedition.

The 35-year-old Woolton Hill man reached the summit at 5.37am on Saturday after climbing throughout the night from the final camp.

Mr Farmer, a land developer, was invited to join an eight-man expedition on an unguided trip to climb the world's highest mountain.

His final summit bid was not without its problems. Batteries on his head torch froze after leaving the final camp – thrusting him into pitch-black darkness until he could get a small LED light working to complete the rest of the climb by "birthday candle light".

His water bottle also quickly froze, leaving him without fluids for more than 10 hours.

However, despite the setbacks and a case of frostbite, Mr Farmer recounted reaching the top.

"Suddenly I felt a huge slap on my back and a hand grip my arm; it was the person behind me," he said. "He was congratulating me for reaching the summit. I pulled myself out of the drunkenness of exhaustion and realised I was actually here. At 5.37 am on the 24th May 2008, I was on top of the world. I grabbed his arm and shook it back."

At the summit, Mr Farmer said: "I was blessed with an awesome view. Beneath me was like looking down on a whole new world."

Mr Farmer had a troubled descent after climbers from other parties suffered injuries. One died on the mountain side.

As he reached the third stage camp on the way up, the Newbury mountaineer met legendary British explorer Sir Ranulph Fiennes, who was later forced to abandon his own attempt at the summit after suffering from vertigo and heart problems.