

On top of the world and aiming higher

Mountaineer scales highest peaks and now turns to technical difficulty

A WEST Berkshire mountaineer is on top of the world after completing one of the toughest challenges in his sport.

Lee Farmer, of Woolton Hill, became one of the very few people who have scaled the peaks of the highest mountain on each of the seven continents.

The 39-year-old Newbury-

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based climber has just returned from a four-week expedition to scale the 6,194m peak of Denali, the highest mountain in North America. The snow packed peak sits in the heart of Alaska and is subject to incredible cold and 100mph winds.

Mr Farmer and his team conquered the icy peak on June 23, a few days earlier than expected.

He said upon his return to the UK last Thursday: "This was the hardest mountain I've ever done because of the cold and the conditions. Temperatures were about minus 30 degrees centigrade. It's very, very tiring. You're tied to two other guys and you're having to jump across two or three-foot crevasses, constantly stopping to put on crampons and snowshoes or take them off, and all the while pulling sledges. If one of us slipped we clipped up again - we wanted to be heroes not machos. Not one day was easy."

He went on: "I'm so pleased to have done this. Since the age of

about 28 I've been dreaming of climbing all the highest peaks in the seven continents. It was getting desperately tight when we were huddled there for four days at high camp with supplies running out waiting for the weather window for our summit attempt. I just had to do it, and I can't believe now I'm down that I have done it."

"I survived on a mini Snickers, a few M&Ms and just a litre of water during that final 13 hours. I've lost 15lbs, and everyone else is the same. It's not that you don't eat, it's just that you work so hard for so many hours."

Mr Farmer was the most experienced climber in his group and the only one to have scaled the peaks of the highest mountains on the six other continents, including Everest. He has now become the 272nd person to complete this quest.

As for what comes next, Mr Farmer said that once he had recovered from a very mild case of frostbite he is off to the mountains again. "There are always going to be more mountains, but over the rest of the summer I what I want to do. I think I want to push things more technically and climb more technically difficult mountains.

"Since 2003, I have been living and breathing mountains, and that's not going to change now," he said.



Lee Farmer

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