

Failed Everest ascent doesn't stop Squaw climber

By Jen Murphy, Wall Street Journal

Professional climber Adrian Ballinger was in phenomenal shape when he left for an expedition to Mount Everest on April 6. When he got down from the mountain May 28, he was as frail as a 90-year-old man.

A week later, at a rock-climbing gym back home in Squaw Valley, he watched his girlfriend, professional climber Emily Harrington, crank out one-arm push ups. "I was shocked when I realized I couldn't even do one," he recalled. "Psychologically, as a professional athlete, it's hard to be OK with being incredibly weak."

The 40-year-old founder and head guide of adventure-travel company Alpenglow Expeditions, Ballinger has summited Everest six times, each time as a guide and each time using supplemental oxygen. On his most recent trip, he and his climbing partner, 35-year-old Cory Richards, attempted the summit without the use of supplemental oxygen.

Ballinger got home June 4 and had less than two weeks to prepare for his next expedition. He and Harrington flew to Tanzania June 15 to lead clients on a weeklong trek to the 19,341-foot summit of Mount Kilimanjaro. "I know it sounds like a terrible idea," Ballinger said, "but this is the only time the family could travel."

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