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MN Man Attempting Feat Only Three Others Have Done



Jason DeRusha (http://wcco.com/bios/local_bio_161103707.html)
Reporting

(WCCO) *St. Paul* Mount Everest. Growing up in Chaska, Minn., Neal Mueller never saw anything like it.

"Everest is the unobtainable," the 27-year-old said, "especially for a guy growing up in the flat plains of Minnesota."

"We were in what's called the death zone," he said. "You're body is literally suffocating to death with every breath."

Mueller is only the second Minnesotan to reach Everest's summit and he did it on his first try, a feat that's extremely rare.

"To think I was, on that day, the tallest person in the world is pretty captivating for me," Mueller said.

And now, Mueller is going back for more -- six peaks on six continents down and one to go.

With a mountain in Australia left to conquer, Mueller went to Children's Hospital in St. Paul to see how he measured up as an elite athlete.

Dr. Dan Halvorsen normally works with kids, many of whom are obese and hate to exercise.

"And whether it's walking around Lake Calhoun, or getting 5,000 steps a day on a pedometer or climbing Mount Everest, it's really the same question," Halvorsen said. "It's just a different magnitude."

Mueller said he knew of the doctor's reputation and came back to go through tests, trying to find out if he's an athletic machine or if it's grit pulling him to great heights.

"It's been sobering for me to realize that, quantifiably speaking, I'm fairly average," Mueller said.

But there's nothing average about reaching high and tasting the sky. And Mueller said he's just getting started.

"There's a Buddhist quote that says, 'Once you reach the summit, keep climbing,'" Mueller said.

If he succeeds in December, Mueller will become the fourth person to go seven for seven, hitting the monster mountain in each continent.

Mueller's also a climber in the business world. He'll be at The Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania for graduate school next year.

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