

## **Annapurna 1, South face – 8th, 9th of October 2013 – Ueli Steck**

### **A factual analysis, key elements summary**

By Rodolphe Popier

1/ There are no **direct** (whatever from GPS swatch tracker, camera, Sat Phone, night time-lapse from Advanced Base Camp...) or **indirect objective elements** (lights witnessed from ABC, tracks...) proving Steck has climbed above his bivouac during the night of the 8<sup>th</sup>-9th October 2013. Confirmed direct observation of Steck ended when he got into his c.6900m bivouac on the 8<sup>th</sup> of October about 5PM, then started again on the 9<sup>th</sup> from c.6500m in early morning as he was down climbing. His bivy was found by the French Graziani/Benoist 2 weeks later, but no signs of passage were found above (both French confirmed it separately).

2/ The testimonies of both Tenji Sherpa and Ngima Sherpa, to have witnessed **lights** in the headwall then below the summit while descending are in contradiction with other team members who also went outside that night, once even at the same time (Bowie and Tenji around midnight). None of these members confirmed to have seen any lights that night. By the way no one spoke about it the morning after before spotting Steck descending.

3/ Steck's elements of **timing** for the whole climb are intrinsically vague, due to the lack of objective measurement, whether from Steck (despite the theoretical use of GPS swatch to the top – measured it thanks to his altimeter, see part 6/) or ABC members (no time-lapse pictures during night time). It can be concluded however, based on these vague elements, that Steck is able to climb above 7000m during night time as fast and harder than below 7000m during day time, whatever ascending or descending.

If being at least twice faster in the lower half of the south face during day time than the 2 other French teams (Beghin/Lafaille 1992 and Benoist/Graziani 2013), in the upper half during night time, the Swiss is at least 3 times faster (French needed 2,5 days for the sole headwall in 2013, climbing day time ; Steck around 6h45 from his bivouac to the top).

Steck's descent time from the top to his bivouac (8091 to c.6900) is 3h, with 8 Abalakovs abseils for the whole headwall (not leaving any of his piton or ice screws)...Graziani/Benoist needed 2 days (24,25th of October) for the same section, abseiling the whole headwall with most of their gear.

4/ The reported exceptional **conditions** meant to have allowed the ascent can't be confirmed by pictures' check: in afternoon of the 8<sup>th</sup> of October, then in the morning of the 9<sup>th</sup>, no signs of a proper thin neve layer covering the headwall. Nevertheless, close compared views of the headwall beginning show better ice conditions for the Swiss than for the French of 2013 (1992 French had by far the driest conditions).

5/ There are 3 main **contradictory statements** for that climb:

- about the **summit**: 4 versions (in first one summit is checked thanks to the altimeter; in second one, replacing the first one, Steck mentions to have stopped at the second of the 3 summit cornices; in third one Steck mentions to have stopped straight at the summit ridge when exiting from the south face; a fourth one shows many route draws stopping at the eastern foresummit)
- the **camera's loss**: 2 versions (one at 6700m ; the other at 7000m after reaching the headwall)
- the number of **abseils**: 3 versions (8 to Andreas Kubin ; 10 to Manu Rivaud ; 4 or 5 to Stephan Siegrist)

6/ Despite being intrinsically very subjective, it can be mentioned that Steck didn't manifest any particular signs of **tiredness** after the climb. Running back to ABC then to BC on the 9th of October. Having the same usual running session on the morning after with Patitucci. Then running straight to Pokhara on the 11th. Only in the evening of the 9th, Patitucci mentions that Steck had to go to bed prior to his friends during the party held in honour of his ascent.