Record-breaking glory on Mt Everest

By Lucy Ihhobston
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Lake Hawea climber Dean Staples held the record for the most ascents of Mt Everest by a New Zealander until just last two days, before Queenstown climber Mark Woodward matched the feat.

Mr Staples, 49, reached the summit of the world's highest peak for the ninth time yesterday.

He was lead guide for an expedition run by Wanaka-based company Adventure Consultants.

A New Zealand Alpine Club spokesman said the achievement meant Mr Staples had almost certainly climbed Everest more times than any other New Zealander.

However, Mr Woodward, 49, is hot on Mr Staples' heels. He is guiding for a separate Everest expedition run by Himalayan Experience - a New Zealand-owned company based in France - which is expected to summit tomorrow. If successful, it will be Mr Woodward's ninth ascent also.

His and Mr Staples' milestones come just days before the 60th anniversary of the first ascent of Mt Everest, by Sir Edmund Hillary, on May 29, 1953.

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Mr Staples first reached the summit of Everest in 2004, and was the first New Zealander to climb it from both the north and south sides.
Mr Woodward’s wife Lorraine said she was fairly certain her husband had also
summitted Everest for the first time in 2004, and several of his ascents had been
completed with Mr Staples, who had also worked for Himalayan Experience
before becoming an Adventure Consultants guide.

The race to complete the record-breaking climb was now “an annual thing” for
the pair, she said.

The other New Zealanders among the Adventure Consultants group which
successfully reached the summit yesterday were Dunedin mountaineer and
video-game designer Dean “Rocket” Hall, 32, and Mr Staples’ partner and
assistant guide Lynda Bradley, 51, who was the first woman to climb Everest
without bottled oxygen in 1988. This was her third ascent.

Another Adventure Consultants guide, Mike Roberts of Wanaka, summited
Everest for his seventh time in a separate private expedition on Sunday. While his
client had turned back because of severe foot pain, Mr Roberts continued to the
summit with Tendi Sherpa. The pair then summited neighbouring Lhotse — the
fourth highest peak in the world — yesterday, without dropping back to base
camp.

Mr Roberts had aimed to complete the double summit within 24 hours but was
delayed after assisting with an attempted rescue on Lhotse. It was instead
completed within 48 hours and is believed to be another first for a New
Zealander.

US climber Dave Hahn holds the record for the most Everest ascents for a
non-Sherpa climber, after successfully reaching the summit for the 14th time in
2012. It is understood he will be making his 15th bid this year.

The overall world record for the most successful Everest climbs is 21, according
to the Guinness World Records website, held by Nepalese Sherpa Apu
redouwnamed “Super Sherpa”, who reached the mountain’s summit most recently
in May 2011.

The Adventure Consultants Everest group was expected to descend as far as
Everest Camp 3 last night.

- Otago Daily Times

By Lucy Ibbotson