ON TOP OF THE WORLD

For most of us an adventure is going off-road in Moz with our brand new 4x4. Loads of fun, certainly, but Waterkloof’s Ben Swart prefers his adventures to be a little more adventurous. Like 8 848 metres up and clinging to a rock face adventurous. Scary stuff!

Ben Swart is an advocate involved in Commercial Law. He’s been practising for the last 19 years and has a 12-year-old son, Dreyer. Solid father figure? Check. Smart, sensible bloke? Check. So you might be surprised to find out that this seemingly sane man has summited six of the world’s toughest and most challenging mountains. And he did it all for fun.

Well, there may be some underlying reasons that are far nobler than pure enjoyment, but the fact remains that Ben Swart is one of those individuals who actually likes pushing himself to his limits and beyond, who looks a challenge in the eye and, in his rather quiet and unobtrusive way, says ‘bring it on’. His enthusiastic approach to life means he experiences everything to the fullest and loves every minute of it, even if it’s hot, sweaty and a lot dangerous.

He’s been climbing for roughly six years now, and he’s achieved an impressive list of accomplishments. His first epic summit was Elbrus, West Russia, in 2004. ‘A friend suggested I join them on an expedition to the top of Elbrus. It was only afterwards that I found out it was one of the seven summits and I guess I was inspired to do the rest.’

Elbrus counts as Europe’s highest peak and was just the first of many summits for Ben. Next was Aconcagua in South America in 2007, followed by Mount Everest to summit one of the world’s most dangerous mountains? Once again he makes a simple but powerful statement. He says ‘I felt quiet elation. A feeling of gratitude that things worked out for me. It’s small, a true summit, and with people summiting from the north and the south you sometimes have to wait your turn.’ (To be honest, while we admired the zero, we’re not sure we’ll be hiking up to the top of Mount Everest to achieve it, but it’s a nice dream.)

Next on the list is Africa’s own giant, Kilimanjaro, in 2004. ‘It was an epic Mount Kilimanjaro, but the climb to the summit was a lot easier than the other expeditions I’ve done. I think it’s because the rest of the world was not aware of Kilimanjaro as a climbing mountain.’

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For Ben, it’s simple, ‘Climbing mountains enables me to view my own life and life in general in context. It gives me an appreciation for the small things we usually take for granted, like good health and friendship.’

And listen to this: ‘I’ve been practical about building my fitness. I had my social run and I had my social gym and a full medical check-up!’

In order to complete the seven great summits of the world. Until then Ben will spend some time relaxing with his son, reading, and scuba diving in Sodwana and southern Mozambique and no doubt planning his next big adventure.

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