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Weather beats SA climbers on Everest

BY PRISCILLA SINGH

The two remaining South African climbers hoping to conquer Mount Everest, Alex Harris and Anton Erasmus, have bailed out as weather conditions deteriorated on the north col.

In an interview with Radio 5 last night, Mark Campbell said expedition leader Harris and Erasmus were forced to make the descent back to the advanced base camp as howling winds and increased snowfalls made the going impossible.

The pair had been waiting patiently in their tents for the blizzard to lift, but when their tents became almost engulfed by the snow, they radioed team members, Sean Disney, Robin Walshaw and Campbell, to say they had had enough and were heading back.

Erasmus and Harris were expected to reach the advanced base camp, at 6 400m, some time last night, after which the adventurers would decide whether to stay on the mountain.

Campbell said they were the only ones left on Everest as all the other expedition teams had left because of the unfavourable weather.

He said the mountain was completely covered in cloud, and from the advanced base camp visibility was minimal.

While the weather seemed set for the next nine days, they had plenty of food and provisions, he said.

However, it was imperative that the team descended before the passes were snowed in, coupled with the added danger of avalanches, Campbell said.