

Everest conqueror Danaei sets sights on K2 peak

By Mahdieh Qazvinian
Guest contributor

Iranian record-breaking mountaineer Amir Danaei says his next journey will be aimed at summiting K2 in the Karakoram range on the Pakistan-China border.

"I will leave for Pakistan in late April, and I will be joined by a group of climbers from all around the world to head for K2," Danaei told Iran Daily, adding: "Given its unique conditions, K2 is a dream destination for all mountaineers, and I want to be the youngest Iranian to ever reach that summit." At 8,611 meters, K2 is the second highest peak in the world, known to be one of the most dangerous and difficult treks due to avalanches, steepness and unpredictable weather. Nicknamed the 'Savage Mountain', K2 boasts the second highest fatality rate – follow-

ing Annapurna in Nepal – with 23 deaths per 100 successful summits.

K2's death zone is particularly perilous, and its constant rockfalls, and difficult climbing sections contribute to its high mortality rate.

Some high-profile mountaineers, including Pakistani Muhammad Ali Sadpara, lost their lives while ascending the mountain.

Danaei, however, is no stranger to the scale of the task as he became the youngest-ever Iranian to reach the highest altitude on the face of the earth when he peaked Mount Everest at the age of 23 last May.

"I was privileged to train under a couple of acclaimed mountaineers in Nepalese Mingma Gyabu Sherpa and Nirmal Purja before embarking on the 150-day ascent," Danaei said.

The feat saw the Iranian receive a world gold medal by the country's Sports Ministry – a prize handed to the climbers who summit the 8,500m-plus peaks.

Danaei, for whom the climbing adventure began with Georgia's Mount Kazbek – a dormant stratovolcano in the Caucasus – when he was 16, says his Everest ascent rounded off "seven years of hard work and dedication" to his beloved sport.

"It is a dream for any mountaineer to step on the Everest peak one day. You have to be a climbing devotee and put your life at stake to achieve your goal. All those years of tireless effort flashed right before my eyes when I stood on the peak," said the Iranian.

"There was no clouds and fog around, so I could easily see the distant horizon. The oxygen level is massively low up there but I took the mask off and offered gratitude to the greatness of God while waving the Iranian flag. I'm sure that moment will never be repeated in my life."

Speaking of the challenges facing him in the Everest journey, Danaei said: "The proper climbing equipment has always been a top priority for me as I believe that can save you life in the toughest circumstances.

The Nepalese food was also a barrier as it does not fit the Iranian taste, which is why I had to carry a 120kg bag with me." "Our trip was delayed by the adverse weather a couple of times, no to mention the avalanches are quite challenging. A polish female teammate and I were stuck in one and came within inches of the death," Danaei added.

"The most unpredicted incident, however, happened when an Indian climber in the group had a Covid-like illness and led to the rest of team suffering from that. I remember I had to deal with a high temperature in a 6,500m-high camp but I carried on."

The K2 ascent will be yet another episode in an already impressive career for Danaei, who has peaked Mount Ararat in Turkey and Armenia's Mount Aragats as well as Mount Damavand – the highest peak in Iran and West Asia at 5,609 meters – on a remarkable 30 occasions over the past seven years.



Embiid scores record 70 points as 76ers beat Spurs

BBC – Joel Embiid became only the ninth player in NBA history to score 70 or more points in a game as the Philadelphia 76ers beat the San Antonio Spurs 133-123.

His tally of 70 points beat the franchise record of 68, held by the legendary Wilt Chamberlain since 1967.

Embiid also made a career-high 18 rebounds and contributed five assists.

"When he gets motivated like that, anything can happen," said 76ers coach Nick Nurse.

"He can score in so many ways. His sheer size gets him a lot of stuff around the basket and a lot of free throws.

"And his shooting touch is the skill that makes it extra hard to stop him."

Tyrese Maxey was the next highest scorer for the 76ers

with 18 points, while number one draft pick Victor Wembanyama scored 33 for the Spurs.

The 76ers, who have won three successive games, are third in the Eastern Conference, while the Spurs are bottom of the Western Conference with only eight wins from 43 matches. Karl-Anthony Towns scored a franchise record 62 points in the Minnesota Timberwolves' 128-125 home defeat by the Charlotte Hornets.

It was only the fourth time – and the first since 1978 – when two NBA players scored at least 60 points on the same day.

When Embiid, the NBA's Most Valuable Player, broke the 76ers record with one minute 41 seconds remaining, they called a timeout to allow him to leave the game. He received a standing ovation at the Wells

Fargo Center in Philadelphia. David Robinson, David Thompson, Elgin Baylor, Kobe Bryant, Donovan Mitchell, Devin Booker and Damian Lillard are the other players to score 70 points or more in a game.

Chamberlain holds the record with 100 for the Philadelphia Warriors against the New York Knicks in 1962.

The game was played 18 years to the day since Los Angeles Lakers legend Bryant scored 81 points against the Toronto Raptors – the second-highest individual haul in NBA history. "From the time I started playing, Kobe was my guy," Embiid said.

"He's the reason I started playing basketball. It's funny, on the same night he got 81 and was my favourite player."

Embiid has now scored at least

30 points in 21 consecutive games.

Kevin Durant scored a season-high 43 points to help the Phoenix Suns to a 115-113 home win over the Chicago Bulls.

Giannis Antetokounmpo scored 31 points and made 17 rebounds and 10 assists to help the Milwaukee Bucks to a 122-113 victory – their ninth in succession – at the Detroit Pistons. Jayson Tatum contributed 39 points and 11 rebounds as the Boston Celtics won 119-110 at the Dallas Mavericks, for whom Luka Doncic scored 33 points.

Philadelphia 76ers' Joel Embiid (21) goes up for the basket during an NBA victory over the San Antonio Spurs in Philadelphia, PA, US, on January 22, 2024.
AP



Tajikistan players and the coaching staff celebrate after the 2-1 victory over Lebanon in the AFC Asian Cup in Doha, Qatar, on January 22, 2024.
AFC

AFC Asian Cup: 'Great characters' took Tajikistan through, head coach Segrt says

AFC – Head coach Petar Segrt applauded the mental resilience of his players after Tajikistan came from behind to defeat Lebanon 2-1 in their AFC Asian Cup Group A tie on Monday.

Victory meant Tajikistan sealed a place in the knockout stage in their debut campaign.

The 56-year-old may have lost his spectacles amidst the joyous scenes after the final whistle but Segrt could see clearly where the match was won against Lebanon.

"It was a fantastic game, a tough game," said the Croatian. "Don't forget, two

times we got our goals cancelled, it was the right decision but mentally, it can be draining so I'm very proud of my players, they showed great fight.

"Lebanon played well but I thought we would get chances because we could see them tiring, so we just needed to keep attacking. This kind of game, you play for your life.

"I believe in these boys, they have great characters. Tajikistan people are fighters and they will fight until the end.

"Just this morning I spoke to Joachim Low (former Germany manager) and told him

this is a wonderful tournament and you can see that in this game.

"For us this is a big dream to qualify for this tournament. Then the dream became to qualify to the knockout stage. Now we dream again."

Bassel Jradi opened the scoring for Lebanon just after half-time but Kassem El Zein's red card turned the tide in Tajikistan's favour with Parvizdzhon Umarbaev netting the equaliser in the 80th minute before Nuriddin Khamrokulov headed in the winner two minutes into stoppage time.