IT’S SO FOREIGN AND STRANGE UP THERE. IT’S A THREATENING ENVIRONMENT. Your focus never changes. You still need energy to get down the mountain."

arriving at Mt. Everest on April 1 for a trip up the mountain’s south face. The team hiked for 10 days to base camp at 17,000 feet, where they stayed for five days, acclimatizing to the altitude.

Delehanty had a rocky start, catching a cold, pulling her chest muscles twice in coughing fits, then tearing a muscle in her back. In the thin air, healing was slow.

The climbers spent the days and weeks practicing, getting accustomed to the higher altitudes and thinner air and climbing parts of Everest and nearby mountains. Delehanty’s injuries sometimes kept her from climbing with her team, and she couldn’t complete one of their acclimatization climbs. "Most of us arrive with pre-existing conditions, like ankle, knee or hip prob-
lems,” she said. "But we’re generally prepared for that make this tough.”

Over the next few weeks, the group ascended to camps 2, 3 and 4, adapting and practicing on treacherous parts of the mountain face, such as the rope and ladder crossings of the shifting Khumbu Icefall. Weather was unpredictable and extreme – sometimes cloudy and cold, others bright and hot.

"It’s a steep climb. It goes to the highest altitude with wind. Visibility was only about 10 feet as she traversed the Cornice knife-edge ridge, with falls of 8,000 feet off one side and 10,000 on the other."

After climbing more than eight hours, Delehanty heard her Sherpas, Lakpa Nuru, cry “Summit!”

“T’was my team members’ smiling faces,” she said, “and I was happy to be there with them.”

She was sure she’d weep when she reached the top. Once there, the summit push was easy. “I saw my team members’ smiling faces,” she said, "and I was happy to be there with them.”

"It’s so foreign and strange up there,” she said. “It’s a threatening environment. Your focus never changes. You still need energy to get down the mountain.”

As she was sure she’d weep when she reached the top. Once there, though, she found the overwhelming feeling was simply “It’s about time!”

"It’s so foreign and strange up there,” she said. “It’s a threatening environment. Your focus never changes. You still need energy to get down the mountain."

Russell Price, her expedition leader, told her it would be a couple of months before the magnitude of her achievement sunk in. He was right.

"I was at the gym, where I had spent so much time getting in shape for the climb,” she said. “It was the first time I went back, a couple months after. I was running on a treadmill, and I got teary-eyed. I realized I was there because I wanted to be, not because I had to be to get ready for Everest. I’d done it.”

count to five slowly before I took another. My body was literally spent. But I made it.”

After reaching Camp 4, at more than 26,000 feet, the team planned its final summit push. Delehanty’s squad left around 1 a.m. May 23. Her legs ached as she pushed through snow and wind. Visibility was only about 10 feet as she traversed the Cornice knife-edge ridge, with falls of 8,000 feet off one side and 10,000 on the other.

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