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Weather ends Boston woman's quest for K2 history

By Dugan Arnett Globe Staff, July 26, 2015, 5:04 p.m.



Vanessa O'Brien, pictured in June, is part of an expedition team that announced Saturday that it was abandoning its attempt because of inclement weather. Aram Boghosian /Globe Photo/File/Globe Freelance

A Back Bay woman's attempt to become the first American woman to reach the summit of K2 was thwarted over the weekend by Mother Nature.

Vanessa O'Brien, a onetime banker whose preparations for the climb were chronicled in a [Globe story](#) this month, is part of an expedition team that announced Saturday that it was abandoning its attempt on the notoriously dangerous mountain because of inclement weather. "During the last few days the weather and route conditions have deteriorated significantly on K2, causing many avalanches and also rock fall," according to a [post](#) on the Madison Mountaineering website. "The climate here has warmed up dramatically, and as a result snow slides down to the glacial ice have peeled off K2 and the surrounding peaks."

The group also reported that a member of the expedition's Sherpa team had been injured by falling rock and taken by helicopter to Skardu, Pakistan, for treatment.

[Boston climber aims to be first US woman to summit K2](#)

The inability to make an attempt on the summit of K2 isn't rare. Since 2009, there have been only two years with successful summits from the Pakistan side of the mountain, according to **Alan Arnette**, who climbed K2 last year and has been tracking this year's progress on [his blog](#).



Vanessa O'Brien in front of K2 (upper right) and Broad Peak (upper left).

It would be very unlikely, he added, that anyone would reach the summit of the world's second-highest mountain this season. "At this point," Arnette said, "the snow conditions are just so bad it would be suicide to attempt it." In addition to its fickle climate, K2 is also one of the world's most dangerous mountains, with a summit-to-death ratio of roughly 4 to 1. Only 377 people have reached the top of K2, according to the climbing website 8000ers.com, run by **Eberhard Jurgalski** ; 85 people have died.

Whether O'Brien plans to make an attempt next year is unclear; she couldn't be reached Sunday. But her time abroad might not be over. In its post, Madison Mountaineering indicated the group might make an attempt at nearby Broad Peak, the world's 12th-tallest mountain. "We will close up our base camp over the next few days and then plan to head out, [though] there is still a chance we will make a Broad Peak attempt, weather and route conditions permitting," the post read. Dugan Arnett can be reached at dugan.arnett@globe.com