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BOYS

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Novice climber takes fast route to top

British student sets record for Everest

Joanna Sugden

A 22-year-old who climbed her first mountain last year has become the youngest British woman to reach the summit of Everest.

Bonita Norris, a Royal Holloway student from Berkshire, scaled the world's highest peak with Kenton Cool, who broke his own British record with an eighth successful climb. At 21 she had ascended her first mountain — Manaslu, another Himalayan peak.

Last night her mother, Jacqui Andrews, told *The Times*: "I feel like I'm on top of the world too, I'm so proud."

There are no other mountaineers in the family and Norris had only done a bit of rock climbing before tackling the world's toughest mountains. The record she has broken was set by Victoria James, who was 25 when she reached the summit.

Before setting out on the expedition Norris said: "I was 17 when I first told my stepdad I was going to climb Everest one day. This has been a dream for a long time but I kept dismissing it."

"One morning in 2008 I woke up with a crazy idea — the kind of idea you dismiss as a pipe dream. But it stuck. My idea was to climb Everest in its spring season of 2010, and raise a shedload of cash for charity along the way." The climb has raised tens of thousands of pounds for Global Angels, an international children's charity.

Norris has taken part in a number of "extreme marathons" and her training included running 50 miles a week.



BONITA NORRIS / PA

Bonita Norris yesterday became the youngest British woman to climb Everest, raising thousands of pounds for charity

Before she went to Base Camp to acclimatise herself for the trek, Norris admitted: "It wasn't always this way. The first time I exercised when I was 17 I went jogging for 30 seconds and thought I was going to die.

"But the next day I went jogging for a

minute, and so on, and now I'm climbing Everest."

Cool, 36, who guided Sir Ranulph Fiennes on the 2008 Marie Curie Everest Expedition, devised her training schedule. Cool has now reached the summit of Mount Everest four more

times than the next most successful Briton. In a message relayed from the summit, he said: "I love Everest. To have summited once was mildly insane. To have summited for an eighth time is utter madness. Why eight times? Why not?"

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