

The Telegraph

Culture | **TV**

Our Everest Challenge with Ben Fogle and Victoria Pendleton, review: a peak performance from our favourite adventurer



Not long into Our Everest Challenge with Ben Fogle and Victoria Pendleton (ITV1), Fogle was talking to his two young children, Ludo and Iona, about his looming attempt to climb Everest, back in 2016.

“What do your friends say?” he asked. “He’s going to die,” came Iona’s chirpy response.

Even for this most intrepid of fellows, this felt like a sobering moment, and it also drove home what was really quite unusual about this hour-long, ravishingly shot helping of reality TV. True, many viewers will have known that the ever-engaging adventurer did in fact make it to

the top of the world's tallest mountain and return intact. But not all, I suspect; besides which, any ascent of Everest's 8,848 metres brings with it quite appalling danger, and there was still room for plenty to go very wrong.

As, in fact, it did. To help him fulfil this lifelong dream of his – sponsored, though this was never mentioned – Fogle had chosen as his climbing partner another chum, the retired British cyclist Victoria Pendleton. If anyone could make it, surely it would be this Olympic gold medallist.



But it was not to be. As Dr Sundheep Dhillon – the “altitude expert and mountaineer” who popped up throughout the programme like a well-informed clanging tocsin – revealed, “your sea-level performance is not predictive of how well you’re going to fare on the mountain”. Ominously, he added that long-distance athletes generally manage better than “sprinters”.

And so it proved. Twice Pendleton showed signs of plummeting oxygen levels in her bloodstream and altitude sickness. Having previously heard this likeable, iron-willed woman declare “I’ve been underestimated my whole life”, one felt for her now as, sobbing, she lamented “I think it’s the first time in my life when I feel my body is failing me” before being whisked off the mountain by helicopter.

In the blubbing stakes, however, she was no match for Fogle, who by the way had sweetly, at the start, written “Iona” on one sleeve of his climber’s jacket and “Ludo” on the other, for constant inspiration. His post-Pendleton climb boasted some scary vignettes – the sight of him perched, on a 45 degree slope, 26,000 feet up, as he awaited reinforcements; the repeated failure of his and his cohort’s oxygen regulators. Stir in the thinness of the air, the biting cold and the soul-splintering exhaustion of it all, and this old softie and new father (those sleeves!) found it hard not to forgive and even be moved by Fogle’s doing a George from Peppa Pig as he rang his wife, and told the camera, “This is for all those people who were told they couldn’t, they wouldn’t, they shouldn’t”.

Most reasonable of all, though, was his subsequent confession: “I can’t wait to get back. I think I’m done with mountains now.”

Full article can be found at: <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/tv/2018/08/30/everest-challenge-ben-fogle-victoria-pendleton-review-peak-performance/>

TV review: Our Everest Challenge with Ben Fogle and Victoria Pendleton; The No 5 War

CAROL MIDGLEY

Two celebrities valiantly attempted to reach the top of Everest, with mixed results — but, my, did you see the queues?



Our Everest Challenge: With Ben Fogle and Victoria Pendleton

ITV

★★★★☆

The No 5 War

BBC Four

★★★★☆

Many readers will know that there was an unhappy postscript to Victoria Pendleton's attempt to climb Mount Everest. It wasn't mentioned in **Our Everest Challenge: With Ben Fogle and Victoria Pendleton**, but after [suffering altitude sickness and aborting her climb she later developed depression triggered by oxygen deprivation](#). "I don't have any kind of feeling of self-worth," said the winner of two Olympic and nine World Championship gold medals. Before I'd even seen last night's documentary this was enough to convince me that you couldn't pay me to attempt Everest. A friend once did it. She said it was as busy as the North Circular and she'd never been more "cold, nauseous or bored" in her life.



Victoria Pendleton and Ben Fogle in front of Everest's summit
CNN VISION

So total credit to Fogle, who did reach the summit and looked like an utterly shattered, bearded old man by the time he did. It had been a boyhood dream and he wept at the top, whipping out his phone to call his wife and tell her, tremble-voiced, that it's the hardest thing he has ever done (and he has done a fair bit). But had you noticed the long line of climbers snaking behind him on the way up? It looked like the M4. When Fogle made his final push for the top there was an actual *queue* as if it were a Disneyland ride. Everest must tire of her (it seems all mountains are female) human traffic jams. "It's rush hour," explained Fogle. For an hour he hardly moved. Sceptics would conclude that Everest has become a bucket-list ticker.

Fogle had been emotional the previous night when his guide, Kenton Cool (there's a man with an apt surname), said they would decide tomorrow whether to go ahead. Fogle had written his children's names in pen on his white sleeves and weepily held them up like two sock puppets, saying he was doing it for them. It was a surreal moment. But he got there, despite his oxygen malfunctioning, and congratulations for that. Yet, as well as the stoic Sherpas, didn't you feel for the cameraman, Mark Fisher, whose oxygen also failed, but who still made it to the top? We should remember that in TV some people's efforts are largely invisible.

Full article can be found at: <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/tv-review-our-everest-challenge-with-ben-fogle-and-victoria-pendleton-the-no-5-war-kvtkwszmp>