

THE OTHER TALENTS OF THE ULMA GROUP

Many people in the Group make their professional career compatible with very demanding hobbies where they demonstrate that all obstacles can be overcome with talent and hard work.

High mountains in their purest state

Mikel Díez, ULMA Packaging

Mikel Díez, who has been the industrialization technician at the ULMA Packaging technological centre for 7 years, is a great fan of all outdoor sports but in recent years he has focused on mountain climbing.

Mikel's passion for the mountains has its origin in the enthusiasm for skiing that he inherited from his parents. He started ski mountaineering to avoid the crowds at the ski resorts and it showed him the world of the mountains in winter. One Easter Week while skiing in the Alps with his family he saw Mont Blanc for the first time and promised himself that he would go there one day.

Luckily his partner shares the same hobby and together they have progressed: first the mountains "at home", then the Pyrenees, the Alps, the Andes, until they ended up in the Himalayas. This passion for the mountains enabled them to explore a lot of countries that they would not otherwise have visited, such as Peru, Bolivia, Chile, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Nepal, India, and to see the most remote areas, away from tourist and commercial circuits, through first hand experiences with cultures and people who are very

different from us, which is wonderful and very enriching.

In 2017, together with a good friend from Urretxu, he began an expedition to a remote mountain in the Indian region of Kashmir, NUN 7135m, procuring the difficult logistics to base camp from a local Indian company, which combined another expedition of 4 Indian citizens and 4 Sherpas to his expedition. A strong storm trapped them for 3 days and nights, each one worse than the last, on a narrow ridge where the tent barely fitted, with strong gusts of wind over 100km/h and unable to climb or descend. Their food was running out and they had to start to ration it: "it was very hard, especially psychologically. The mental state is very important on this type of expedition". In the end everything turned out fine, although the mountain did not make it easy for them - they managed to climb to the summit, thus crowning their first 7000m.

"It's a wonderful thing to find yourself alone on a mountain that high, it's completely unusual and it was very special"

On his return from this expedition he was awarded the highly renowned Takolo grant, which was a totally unexpected surprise and Mikel describes it as *"the best possible end to a round trip, a great memory that will last a lifetime."*

"The main thing about this hobby is everything that it has contributed to my life, it changes the way I see many things and it has given me the opportunity to meet many people who are important people in my life", Mikel tells us.

But to maintain the fitness necessary for expeditions Mikel practises many other sports, always in the same environment, rock climbing in summer and ice climbing in winter, trail running, mountain biking, cross-country skiing... for every season a different sport. *"I think I'm one of the*

few people who usually look forward to winter, but I really enjoy each of the seasons," he tells us.

Last December, Enaitz, his first child, was born, and this has forced him to take a short break. For a few months he has barely been near a mountain - *"I would say that it has even been good for me"*.

Expeditions to high mountains take one or even two months and that is difficult to fit in with your work, although he tells us that *"whenever I have made suggestions that fit the regulations, my line managers have given me all the support they could, which I appreciate very much."*

In the future Mikel does not rule out trying one of the 14 eight-thousand, although he needs to sort out a lot of things to do so and he admits that it is not easy.

