

American first to go solo across Antarctica, unaided

Braving the elements, Colin O'Brady covered 1,500 km in 54 days

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An Oregon man became the first person to traverse Antarctica alone without any assistance on Wednesday, trekking across the polar continent in an epic 54-day journey that was previously deemed impossible.

Colin O'Brady, of Portland, finished the bone-chilling, 1,500-km journey as friends, family and fans tracked the endurance athlete's progress in real time online.

Final push

"I did it!" a tearful Brady said on a call to his family gathered in Portland for the holidays, according to his wife, Jenna Besaw. "It was an emotional call," she said. "He seemed overwhelmed by love and gratitude, and he really wanted to say 'Thank you' to all of us."

The 33-year-old O'Brady documented his nearly entirely uphill journey which he called 'The Impossible

First' on his Instagram page. He wrote that he covered the last roughly 129 km in one big, impromptu final push to the finish line that took well over an entire day.

"While the last 32 hours were some of the most challenging hours of my life, they have quite honestly been some of the best moments I have ever experienced," O'Brady posted.

The day before, he posted that he was "in the zone" and thought he could make it to the end in one go.

Though others have traversed Antarctica, they either had assistance with reinforced supplies or kites that helped propel them forward.

In 2016, British explorer Henry Worsley died attempting an unassisted solo trip across Antarctica, collapsing from exhaustion toward the end of the trek. Worsley's friend and fellow English adventurer Louis Rudd is currently attempting an unaided solo in Worsley's



Hauling 170 kg gear largely uphill, there were moments when Colin thought of calling it a day **AP**

honour and was competing against O'Brady to be the first to do it.

O'Brady described in detail the ups and downs along the way since he began the trek on November 3. He had to haul 170 kg of gear largely uphill and over sastrugi — wave-like ridges created by wind.

On November 18, he wrote that he awoke to find his sled completely buried from an all-night blasting of wind

and snow. That day he battled a 30-48 kph headwind for eight hours as he trudged along.

Moments of celebration

"There were several times I considered stopping, putting my tent back up and calling it a day," he wrote.

"I wanted so badly to quit today as I was feeling exhausted and alone, but remembering all of the positiv-

ity that so many people have been sending, I took a deep breath and focussed on maintaining forward progress one step at a time and managed to finish a full day."

As for what's next for O'Brady, who also has summited Mount Everest, Besaw said she's not entirely sure.

"We are just so in the moment celebrating this right now," she said. "Then we'll see what's next on the horizon."