



Courage and good sense ... Sean Disney (left), Robin Walshaw, Alex Harris, Mark Campbell and Anton Erasmus may not have reached the top of Mount Everest, but they are safe and now know what to do when they make their second attempt in 1998.

SA team home after failing to climb Everest, but vow to return

By **TROYE LUND**

While their tearful mothers promised to fatten them up with home cooking and beer, the second group of South African climbers who tried to scale Mt Everest promised the cheering, cork-popping crowd at Johannesburg international airport that they would conquer the mountain in a second attempt in 1998.

Blustering winds and snow hindered this attempt.

"It's a pretty surreal feeling to be home. After days and days on that mountain you begin to hate it. But retrospectively it's beautiful and we'll be back," said Anton Erasmus, one of the five disappointed climbers.

Reaching base camp four and then having made the decision not to summit was a disappoint-

ment to all five friends but they are comforted in knowing there was no other decision to make.

Winter on the mountain came early this year.

Ascending in the extreme snowstorms and jet-stream would, in the words of Godfrey Barclay of the Transvaal Mountaineering Club, have been madness.

"These chaps had great cou-

rage to turn back and the sense to act as a team. They have the experience to make it now under the right conditions," said Barclay.

Although the team tackled the north - and most difficult - face of the mountain, reminders of the fatal South African expedition on the south face earlier this year, as well as reminders of other failed attempts, were everywhere, said

climber Sean Disney.

A bath and a burger were his priorities when he arrived home yesterday evening.

The team described the aim of their expedition as helping to "improve the situation of mountaineering" and to "make it right".

The sport, they said, was about safe learning experiences, even if the tip of the mountain had not been reached.