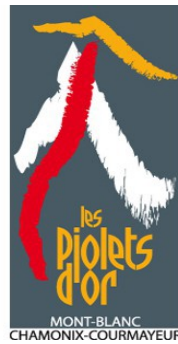




RhôneAlpes



PIOLETS D'OR 2014 Nominated ascents

26 - 29 March

Chamonix-Mont-Blanc (F) - Courmayeur (I)

The Jury of the 22nd edition of the Piolets d'Or - comprising **Catherine Destivelle, Erri de Luca, Karin Steinbach, Sung-Muk Lim, Denis Urubko**, together with this year's president **George Lowe** - had the difficult task of selecting those ascents from 2013 that represent the state of the art in mountaineering today.

The quality and variety of achievements in 2013 has been exceptional, with an increase in innovative and imaginative ascents in all the world's mountain ranges, including those in the "Old World" – the playground of Europe. Here, as well as on the world's highest mountains, a form of alpinism is growing; one that respects the mountain, limits its use of technology, and is characterized by a strong sporting ethic.

Making a choice is never easy: the Jury's work has been outstanding, focusing on four high altitude climbs in the Himalaya/Karakoram and one in Alaska, the latter drawing attention to the vitality in fields other than high altitudes. The Jury has also nominated one climb for a Special Mention, due to the team spirit which made the achievement possible.

From the 76 climbs reviewed by the Piolets d'Or Technical Committee, six will be presented from 26 to 29 March, 2014, in Chamonix and Courmayeur, to celebrate high level mountaineering.

Nominated ascents

Talung, 7,439m (Nepal)

Marek Holecek and **Zdenek Hruby** completed the first ascent of the North face of Talung, a summit situated immediately south of Kangchenjunga. This side of the mountain, previously the target of several attempts, gives a challenging 2,000m of vertical ascent. Despite considerable difficulties, the Czech pair summited in five days, ending the climb in unfavourable weather. The descent of the west face took an additional day. Sadly, Zdenek Hruby died in August on Gasherbrum I.

Kunyang Chhish East, 7,400m (Pakistan)

The Kunyang Chhish still has virgin summits and the east peak had been the object of several previous parties. After two attempts defeated by storm, **Simon Anthamatten** (Switzerland), **Hansjörg et Matthias Auer** (Austria) climbed the 2,700m mixed Southwest face in six days, two of which were spent trapped at 6,700m by foul weather. The corniced summit ridge, with its baroque architecture, proved spectacular.

K6 West, 7,040m (Pakistan)

K6 West has also been the target of several previous attempts. Canadians **Raphael Slawinski** and **Ian Welsted** (Canada), first had to climb through a complex and dangerous icefall to reach an elegant ice/mixed line on the Northwest face, which led in turn to the crest of the upper west ridge. The pair took five days to reach the summit, gaining 2,700m of vertical height above base camp. A further day was needed to descend the route.

Annapurna 8,091m (Nepal)

The South face of Annapurna has been a high altitude forcing ground for progressive Himalayan climbing. An alpine style ascent of this face was completed as early as 1984. In 1992 Pierre Béghin and Jean-Christophe Lafaille tried a route to the right of the 1970 British south pillar, reaching above 7,300m. Retreating from this point in poor weather, Béghin fell to his death. **Ueli Steck** (Switzerland) completed this route in a 28-hour round trip (8-9 October) from an advanced base beneath the ca 2,700m wall, climbing up and down the top section at night to escape strong daytime winds.

Mount Laurens, 3,052m (Alaska)

This isolated icy giant is situated on the Lacuna Glacier, south of Foraker. **Mark Allen** (USA) and **Graham Zimmerman** (USA/New Zealand) took two days to get to the base of the peak from their drop-off point, and then succeeded in making the first ascent of the northeast buttress and north ridge. They reached the summit after two bivouacs, for only its second ascent, negotiating unprotected climbing around large gargoyles cornices. Their ascent, and subsequent descent via the east face, was completed in a total of 67 hours from 20-22 May.

SPECIAL MENTION**Annapurna 8,091m (Nepal)**

From 16 - 24 October **Stéphane Benoist** and **Yannick Graziani** (France) also climbed the South face, following, with variants, the route climbed by Ueli Steck. The descent proved taxing with Stéphane suffering from a lung infection. The 2014 Piolets d'Or Jury has singled out this adventurous climb for a Special Mention, especially for the team spirit that forced a successful conclusion.

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