



Piolets d'Or 2018

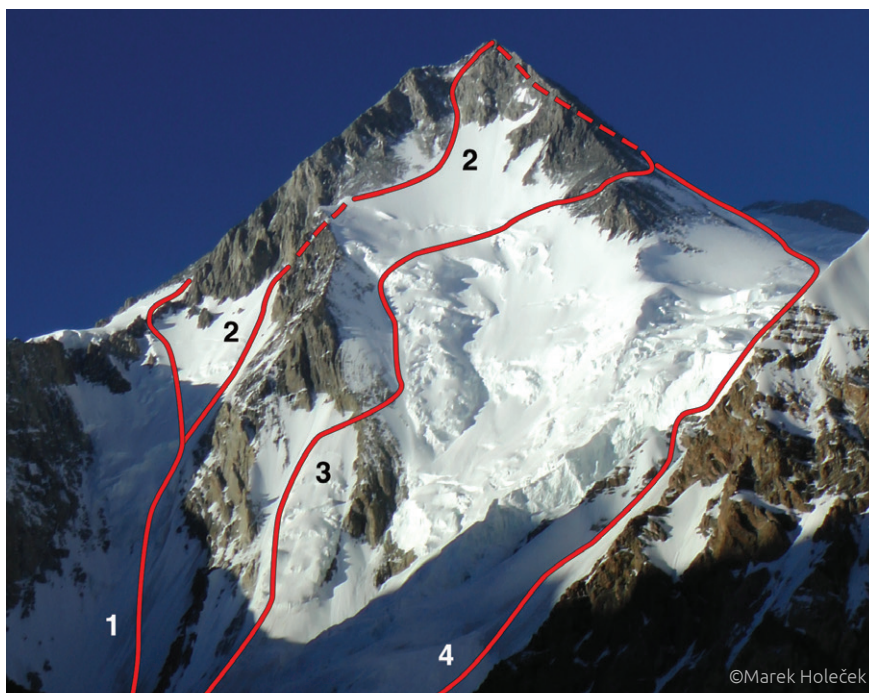
An International Celebration of Grand Alpinism

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Alpine style climbing at high altitude requires the acceptance of loneliness. Up there it is only our strength of mind that keeps us alive. Combine this with very technical climbing and you reach almost the ultimate levels of commitment and luck. This sort of climb is rarely achieved and the degree of uncertainty at the start is so high that few people are prepared to accept the challenge.

This year we have three ascents that fall into this uncommon category. All required a large degree of perseverance and motivation, with some of the climbers having made repeated previous attempts before succeeding. All fully meet our highest mountaineering values.



- (1) Russian, 2008
- (2) Satisfaction!, 2017
- (3) Polish, 1983
- (4) Spanish, 1983

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GASHERBRUM I (8,068M)



Zdeněk Háček-Marek Holeček (Czech Republic)

Complete southwest face, Satisfaction!, 2,600m, ED+ WI5+ M7.
July 25 - August 1 round trip from base camp.

Satisfaction by Zdeněk Háček and Marek Holeček from the Czech Republic is probably the last logical line on the huge west face of Gasherbrum I. It is the first full ascent of the face, and completes a direct line to the summit first attempted back in 1983 by Jerzy Kukuczka and Voytek Kurtyka. Holeček had made four previous attempts on this line, in the process losing one climbing partner and parts of several toes. The successful ascent, beginning on July 25, took six days, with the last bivouac at 8,000m.

The final rock band above 7,800m had presented such a high order of technical climbing that it took a full 12 hours to complete just 80m. The descent from the summit, via the Normal Route along the Japanese Couloir, was first through a white inferno, then down avalanche prone slopes. They returned to base camp eight days after leaving.





SHISPARE (7,611M)

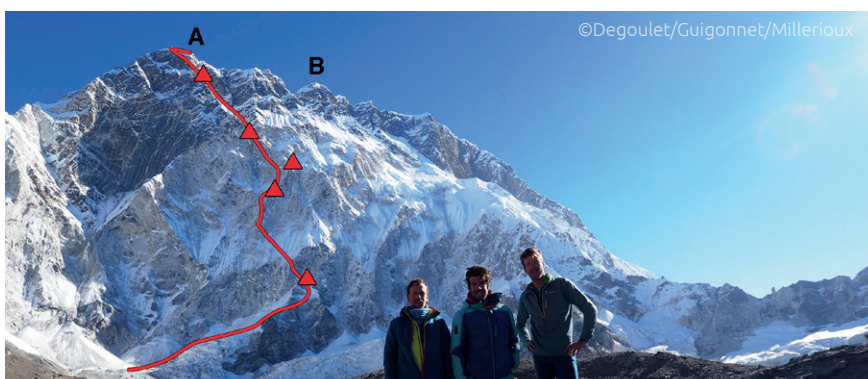


Kazuya Hiraide-Kenro Nakajima (Japan)

Northeast face and traverse, Shukriya, 2,700m, WI5 M6,
August 18-24 round trip from base camp.

The beauty of this coveted line, the full commitment of a difficult alpine-style ascent followed by a traverse of the mountain, and the fact that it was the first ascent of the face, makes Shukriya on the northeast face of Shispare a masterpiece of modern high-altitude climbing. Beginning in 2007, Kazuya Hiraide (Japan) attempted Shispare three times before 2017, once by the northeast face. For his fourth attempt he teamed with fellow countryman Kenro Nakajima. Conditions were poor in the Hunza Valley last August, and the pair battled unstable weather throughout the five-day ascent, experiencing much snowfall and spindrift avalanches. In reaching the summit they had made only the third overall ascent of this elegant, sharp pyramidal peak in the Western Karakoram.

The descent of the original 1974 Polish-German route on the northeast ridge and north spur, with complex route finding in bad weather, was certainly no pushover, and two more days were required before the Japanese could regain base camp.



©Degoulet/Guigonnet/Millerioux

NUPTSE NORTHWEST (NUPTSE NUP II, 7,742M)



Frédéric Degoulet-Benjamin Guigonnet-Hélias Millerioux (FR)

South face, 2,200m, WI6 M5+
October 14-21 round trip from base camp

The immense south face of Nuptse will always provide a difficult, high-altitude challenge. Even the unrepeated route of the 1961 first ascent is widely regarded as one of the first, if not the first, technical big faces climbed in the Himalaya. Benjamin Guigonnet and Hélias Millerioux tried a new line on the left side of the face in 2015 and '16.

On their second attempt they were accompanied by Frédéric Degoulet, reaching 7,400m before bailing. Tenacity paid off in 2017, when all three Frenchmen completed the line and reached the summit of Nuptse Northwest (climbed several times previously from the opposite side). Their route was a bold outing with much steep and difficult terrain. It was committing, not without objective hazards, and required highly technical ice climbing, with at least a dozen pitches of WI5 and above. The climbers bivouacked five times on the ascent and once during the descent (largely by rappel) of their route. This ascent may be destined to gain iconic status in the realm of modern technical Himalayan climbing.



SPECIAL MENTION - NILKANTH (NILKANTHA, 6,596M)



Chantel Astorga-Anne Gilbert Chase-Jason Thompson (USA)

Southwest face, Obscured Perception, 1,400m, WI5 M6 A0 70° snow
September 28-October 2 round trip

The southwest face of shapely Nilkanth (a.k.a Nilkantha, 6,596m) in India's Garhwal Himalaya was described in 2000, by the party that made the first ascent of the west ridge, as a "technical super-alpine challenge". Reaching the foot of this face is not straightforward and involves exposure to objective danger. Continuous tricky mixed ground and beautiful steep ice then lead all the way to the summit, 1,400m above. It was climbed for the first time last autumn with four bivouacs by a three-member American team, which found difficulties up to WI5, M6, A0, and 70° snow, the crux high on the wall in an area dubbed the Castle. They named the route Obscured Perception and it hasn't escaped our notice that women formed the majority of this party.

The southwest face had been the objective for a couple of expeditions before 2015, when it was the goal of Anne Gilbert Chase and Jason Thompson. In order to make a three, they decided to invite Caro North. As a preamble to their attempt (which subsequent bad weather did not allow) these three climbed to 6,400m on the west ridge, which they planned to use for descent. The knowledge gained would prove useful in 2017, when Chase and Thompson decided to return to the mountain. This time Chantel Astorga was recruited as the third member. The three made their final attempt on the southwest face on September 28, reaching the summit on the morning of October 2 and descending the west ridge the same day. Whilst it was a team effort, with shared decision-making and everyone working hard to achieve the objective, the majority of the climbing, including the crux pitches, was led by either Astorga or Chase.

This ascent, and Astorga and Chase's recent landmark four-day ascent of the Slovak Direct on the south face of Denali (2,750m, Alaskan 6, 5.9X M6 WI6+), one of the most difficult and direct routes on the mountain, are representative of the increasing rise in the levels of female alpinism. We hope that their ascents will continue to inspire and encourage women alpinists, as they inspire us all.



SPECIAL MENTION - ALEX HONNOLD



We would like to give a special mention to another American, Alex Honnold, for his outstanding contribution to climbing in the year 2017.

In the mountains he made two short new rock routes in Alaska's Ruth Gorge, and a remarkable series of climbs in Antarctica, where in the famous Fenris Kjeften Range of Queen Maud Land, Honnold reached the summits of 14 peaks by routes of varying difficulty. Notable was the east pillar (dubbed Dark Tower) of Stetind (2,588m), climbed with Cedar Wright. Historians of Antarctic mountaineering feel this is probably the hardest on-sight, all free rock route on the continent. Climbed in cold, windy conditions, and with runout pitches on poor rock, it gave Honnold "the scariest lead of my life". That has to say something!

Of course, all this was very much overshadowed by the astonishing free solo of Free Rider on El Capitan. On this sensibly well-choreographed ascent, Honnold exhibited complete mastery at a level probably unequalled in the history of rock climbing. Regular climbing partner Tommy Caldwell was convinced that in terms of mind control, it was "one of the pinnacle sporting moments of all time".

But we shouldn't forget Alex Honnold's other commitment, on-going through 2017. The Honnold Foundation, founded in 2012, has the simple vision to improve lives and reduce environmental impact by working with partners to promote solar-powered energy worldwide. Last year, work continued with the Solar Energy Foundation (SEF) to carry out much needed installations in Ethiopian villages.



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**PIOLETS D'OR 2018 AWARDS CEREMONY
WILL TAKE PLACE IN LADEK-ZDRÓJ, POLAND
20-23/09/2018**



The 10th edition of the Piolets d'Or will be hosted by the Ladek Festival from 20th to 23rd of Sept 2018.

You will find all information relating to the festival on
www.festiwalgorski.pl/en/

www.pioletsdor.net



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