



THE PIOLETS D'OR

**Chamonix – Mont Blanc – Courmayeur
April 3-6th, 2013**

Special mention ascents

In addition to the six nominated climbs (as published in the previous press release) the Jury of the 2013 Piolets d'Or has assigned a "Special Mention" to two symbolic and historically significant ascents made on Cerro Torre's southeast ridge in early 2012.

The rationale behind this decision is presented in the following summation, which includes statements by Jury president Stephen Venables, and Jury member Silvo Karo.

In 1952, after making the first ascent of neighbouring Fitz Roy, the Frenchman Lionel Terray described Cerro Torre as "an impossible mountain," a expression totally applicable to the ice-capped, mile-high granite needle in his sight. He saw the impossibility because he understood that alpinism implied the willingness to measure oneself against the mountain's natural challenges.

In 1970 Cesare Maestri placed over 300 bolts on the southeast ridge, a manufactured path that unequivocally altered the character of this spectacularly untamed peak. In January 2012 Hayden Kennedy and Jason Kruk climbed the southeast ridge by fair means and removed many of Maestri's bolts during their descent, taking the first step to recover the mountain's natural challenge, an act that also implied restoring it to an uncontroversial state.

A few days later David Lama and Peter Ortner managed to complete a free ascent of the "fair means" southeast ridge, overcoming an even greater natural challenge.

The Piolets d'Or organisers are happy to announce that the protagonists of these two ascents will be present in Chamonix/Courmayeur from April 3rd to 6th.

In his book *2000 Metri della Nostra Vita* Maestri agreed with Kennedy and Kruk's actions, recounting that before making the first rappel he decided to, "take out all the bolts and leave the climb as clean as we found it." Unfortunately, after chopping 20 bolts and confronted by the magnitude of the enterprise, Maestri gave up.

The bolts blinded possibilities: by returning Cerro Torre to a more natural state those blinders have been removed, as witnessed by the countless teams that climbed the west face this year. It turns out that the physical presence of the bolts was not nearly as important as their psychological impact, and their tendency to focus attention on the manufactured path, rather than on the mountain's natural features that allow passage.

Maestri's odyssey and the Compressor Route will live on in history books as a testament to man's potential for hubris and incredible drive, while Cerro Torre has recovered its standing as an icon of wilderness adventure.

The events on Cerro Torre in 2012 forced us to take a close look at the core values of alpinism. As Reinhold Messner explains, it is time to "leave behind the chains of conquest alpinism (1) ...and search again for the limits of possibility—for we must have such limits if we are going to use the virtue of courage to approach them."(2)

When asked about the Compressor Route, the legendary Slovene climber Silvo Karo, responsible for two new routes and one major link up on Cerro Torre, responded, "That climb was stolen from the future. Without all those bolts the history of that marvellous mountain would have been very different. I am convinced that in alpinism how you have climbed is more important than what you have climbed."

Jury president Stephen Venables expressed similar thoughts, saying "over the last 20 years climbing has become more and more a 'consumer' product, where you simply pay to receive a pre-packaged predictable experience. Kennedy, Kruk, Lama and Ortner have restored Cerro Torre's southeast ridge to the realm of genuine adventure. My feeling is that this goes way beyond Cerro Torre. The relentless increase in bolting of every lump of rock in the world is seriously undermining the most basic values of mountaineering".

(1) Personal email.

(2) *The Murder of the Impossible*, 1967.

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