
GRIT&ROCK EXPEDITION AWARD

ENABLING FEMALE FIRST ASCENTS

Press Release

GRIT&ROCK FOUNDATION ANNOUNCES THE WINNERS OF FIRST ASCENT EXPEDITION AWARD'2018

In September 2016 GRIT&ROCK FOUNDATION, a UK-based charity, established an annual international expedition award to promote female first ascents. The aims of the USD10,000 **FIRST ASCENT EXPEDITION AWARD** are to encourage female participation in pioneering alpine ascents and to further the understanding and exploration of the unclimbed peaks. The Award is open to individuals and climbing teams of any nationality with a majority female participation. In 2017 the inaugural award winners included Natalya Martinez, Maryna Kopteva, Galina Chibitok, Anastasia Petrova, Christina Pogacean, Nasim Eshqui, Dawa Sherpa and Elisabeth Revol. The award-funded expeditions took these remarkable women to ground-breaking ascents in China, Nepal, India and Argentina. Two teams have claimed ascents of the previously unclimbed peaks and two opened new beautiful routes in remote parts of the world.

On February 10, 2018, the Award jury consisting of Lydia Bradey, Christian Trommsdorff, Masha Gordon and Victor Saunders announced the winners of the 2018 Award in three categories:

PERFORMANCE

- Anna Torretta, Cecilia Buil and Ixchel Foord (Italy/Spain/Mexico) for an ascent of virgin Mugu Peaks (5,340m) in the Karnali area of Nepal - USD4,000
- Josie McKee, Caro North and Whitney Clark (US/Switzerland) for a new route on Mount Arjuna (6,230m) in India's Kishtwar province - USD3,000

EXPLORATION

- Ilana Jesse and Katie Bono (US) for a virgin ascent in the Hayes range in Alaska (USD2,000)



APPRENTICESHIP

- Alena Panova and Nina Neverov (Russia/France) for a new route on Chon-Tor (4,180m) in Kyrgyzstan (USD1,000)

Christian Trommsdorff, a member of the jury and the President of IFMGA and GMHM that administers the Piolets D'Or award, said 'The jury was impressed with the quality of many applications where a high ambition of projects was matched with strong climbing CVs. In the coming few months, we will be watching these 4 teams with great interest make attempts on their chosen objectives. These journeys will no doubt inspire others to dream up a first ascent goal for the 2019 Award and further female achievement in alpinism'.

Lydia Bradey, a member of the jury, a guide and a first woman to climb Everest without supplementary oxygen, said: 'The GRIT&ROCK First Ascent Expedition Award has started a new movement. Through the exposure of the Award, we see the bridging of the (natural) divides between nationalities, languages and cultures. Exposure to the aspirations and achievements of talented female climbers from around the world leads to a trickle-down effect of inspiration. Inspiration to an elite athlete to lead an expedition to a first ascent in a remote location, inspiration to woman who might consider herself ordinary - to step outside, to lead, to go climbing.'

ENDS

NOTE TO EDITORS:

BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON THE PRIZE WINNERS:

PERFORMANCE AWARD

International team of Anna Torretta, Cecilia Buil and Ixchel Foord have demonstrated long-standing commitment to practicing alpinism at a high-performance level. Their individual stellar resume includes opening of new rock and ice routes, as well as first alpine ascents. Anna Torreta, a mother of 2, ranked globally in the top 5 on the ice-climbing competition circuit. The team's objective to becoming the first humans to stand on the twin summits Mugu Peaks is complemented by a technically challenging big wall ascent of the Mugu Eye.

US-Swiss team of Clark, North and McKee have shown remarkable commitment of expedition life. Whitney Clark has opened new routes in India's Himachal Pradesh and Kishtwar. Josie McKee has made first ascents in Yosemite, El Gran Trono Blanco and on Chilean Cerro Desnudo. Swiss Caro North is an aspirant guide and has done 14 expeditions in the last 10 years ranging from Iran to India.



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EXPLORATION

Colorado natives Ilana Jesse and Katie Bono have a long list of completed challenging rock and mixed-alpine routes. Katie Bono started climbing in earnest in 2012 after retiring from professional cross-country ski-racing. Since then she has competed extensively on World Cup ice-climbing circuit and have become the first American woman to climb M13-.

APPRENTICESHIP

20-year old Alena Panova and 22-year old Nina Neverov hail from Siberian town of Irkutsk where they have been climbing extensively under the tutelage of strong Russian climbers Sergey and Evgeny Glazunov. In the summer of 2017, Panova and Neverova made an ascent of challenging Kupol and have been nominated for the "Steel Angel" prize.

For further information, please see GRIT&ROCK Facebook page, www.gritandrock.com/award or contact Masha Gordon on award@gritandrock.com

