

Piolets d'Or 2026

Nicolas Jean and Benjamin Védrines for the ascent of Jannu East in October 2025.



An award worthy of the achievement

◆ A Major First

It was with great emotion and wide smiles that the two climbers received this distinction during the ceremony held this Friday, October 23, in Saint-Christophe-en-Oisans, for the first ascent of Jannu East (7,468 m), in the Kanchenjunga massif, Himalayas.

The jury praised an ascent carried out in a fast and light alpine style, without support and in total autonomy. A remarkable achievement combining commitment, high-level technical mastery, adaptability, and perfect decision-making in a high-altitude environment.

After three decades of failures and sixteen unsuccessful attempts, Nicolas Jean and Benjamin Védrières had made Jannu East one of their main goals, following a first attempt in 2024. On October 15, 2025, at 1:40 PM (local time), they finally reached the summit and opened a new route on this mythical mountain. Traced on the north face and then along the East Ridge, their route was named «Sommet des Pieux» (2,300 m, M6, WI5).

It took this exceptional rope team only two and a half days of climbing and two bivouacs to accomplish what many considered one of the Himalayas' last great challenges. Upon his return, Nicolas Jean summarized the adventure in a single sentence:
" It is the most important climb of my career. "

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Interview

◆ Winners' words



Reunited for this ceremony, after long months apart for Benjamin Védrynes and numerous steep-skiing firsts and Alpine records for Nicolas Jean, they savor this award together.

"This Piolet d'Or means the world to me. It's recognition from our peers, and that's no small thing! It was with Benjamin that I learned committed, hard-charging alpinism. Receiving this honor together—for our rope team, which prioritizes speed, commitment, and alpine style—has a truly special meaning. It's the culmination of months of preparation, attempts, failures, and finally this success, bringing so much joy along the way. Today takes us right back into that long-haul expedition, into everything we lived through together. It's also in moments like this that we fully realize just how much Jannu East means to us and to our climbing careers. The collective 'Les Amis de La Bérarde' was created after the 2024 disaster. One of their posters reads: 'Take a rock with you—that's one less to clear away.' So we're heading home with our own trophy: a drawing on a large stone from the Vénéon. It's a powerful symbol, steeped in history and emotion, that I'm particularly happy to bring back with me."

_ NICOLAS JEAN



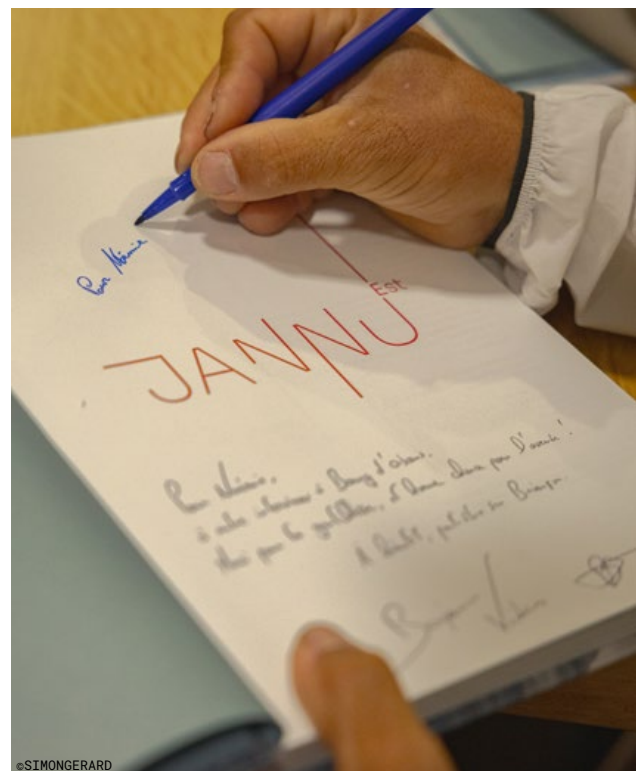
Interview

Part 2

" We set out twice, in 2024 and 2025, to reach the summit of Jannu East. Today feels a bit like a third ascent, with an even stronger symbolic dimension. It is, of course, an immense satisfaction. This face is beautiful, towering, and it was untouched! A major chapter in our history with Jannu East is coming to a close, and I'm glad it's happening here, near La Bérarde, after the scars left by the events of 2024. Our partnership was forged on the west face of the Écrins, and it is deeply meaningful to find ourselves back here, in this mountaineering stronghold, receiving this 2026 Piolet d'Or together, surrounded by climbers from all over the world who share that same passion. I hope the Écrins massif will soon be able to turn a new page, because the mountains always adapt. And this celebration is also a positive sign—a message of hope for the people of the valley. "

_ BENJAMIN VÉDRINES

They also took the time to sign the book "Jannu Est Anatomie d'une expédition" (Glénat publishing), which recounts this exceptional adventure, illustrated by the striking photographs of Thibaut Marot and Quentin Degrenelle. A story told in pictures and words to go behind the scenes of a major ascent and understand everything at play behind such an endeavor: preparation, commitment, decision-making, doubts, and the strength of the partnership.



Conception

◆ From Jannu East to Simond Product Development

Both members of the Simond Avant-Garde athlete team, the two climbers worked closely with the R&D team of the Chamonix-based brand to design and develop gear specifically tailored to the demands of their expedition. During the months leading up to their departure, several prototypes were engineered, tested, and pushed to their limits in the field. Among them, the Woma ice axe—which is now available—as well as the Sprint 33 backpack and the Sprint harness, both slated for release in 2027.

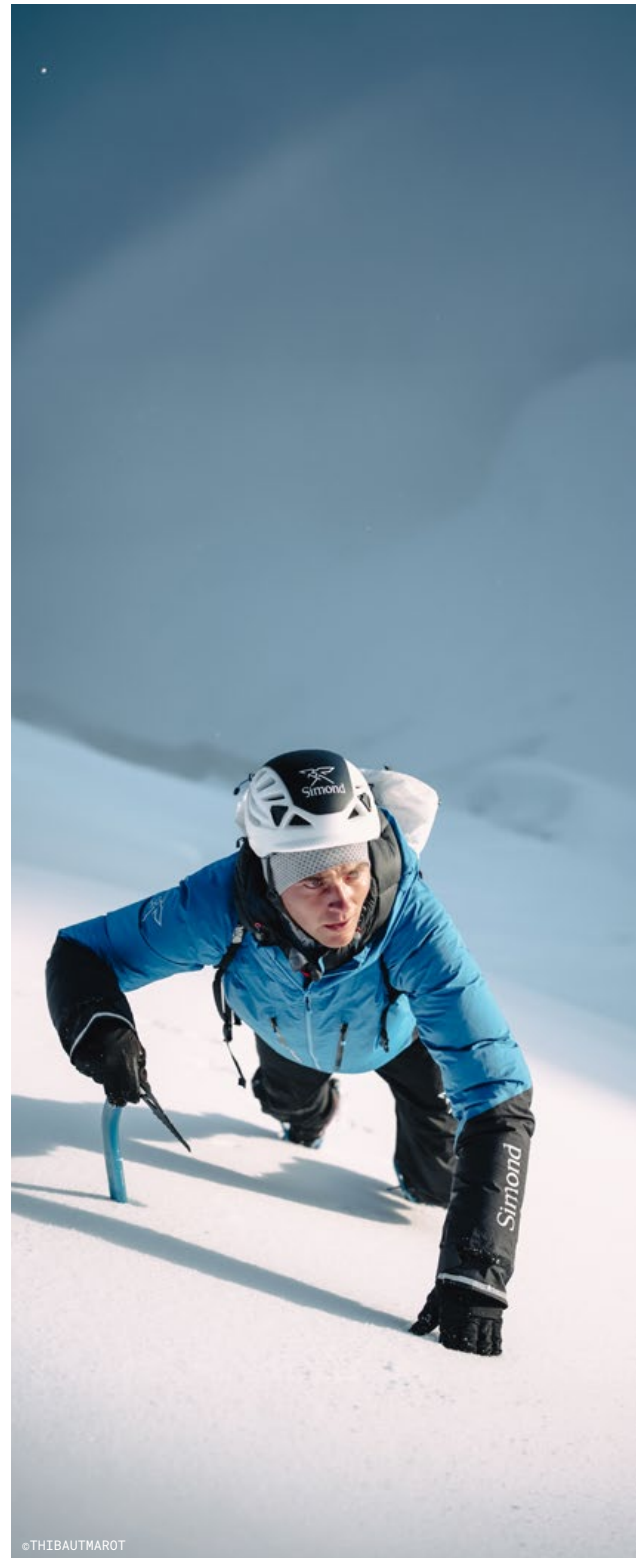
This real-world experience directly feeds Simond product development. It makes it possible today to offer all mountaineers lightweight, high-performance, durable, and reliable equipment, designed in close collaboration with top-level athletes and tested on the most demanding terrain.

[VIEW THE WOMA PRODUCT PAGE >](#)

About Piolets d'Or

The Piolets d'Or draw their inspiration from mountaineering's rich history and evolution. Their core objective is not merely to award the most impressive ascents of the past year, but to use these ascents to promote clear ethical messages regarding climbing practices worldwide, in line with mountaineering's recognition as UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage.

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Vertical Stories: Telling Mountain Stories Differently

◆
Featuring Nicolas Jean
in the Opening Episode!

To give a different voice to the adventures of the Avant-Garde Team, Simond chose another medium: the webtoon, a comic book designed for smartphones whose panels are read vertically while scrolling—the Vertical Stories. Vertical in their environment (exclusively the mountains), and vertical in their format (with a simple swipe of a finger). Each adventure forms a unique partnership: an athlete and an illustrator, chosen for their storytelling sensitivity and affinity with the climber. Color or black-and-white, pacing, staging, multimedia effects... each episode carries its artist's signature style and reveals the expedition from a new angle: doubts, everyday moments, and the intimate side of the climb.

An immersive and original format highlighting the world of Simond in the spirit of alpine style. Essential storytelling, hand-drawn, opening a new dimension to mountain tales.

[DISCOVER OUR VERTICAL STORIES >](#)



#1 "CHAUVE QUI PEUT"

The winter ascent of the Olan, in the Écrins range, by Nicolas Jean. A 500-meter wall epic in temperatures near -10 °C, where commitment, solitude, and control merge in a vertical adventure illustrated by Tomabyou.

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Simond Avant-Garde Team



Discovering their stories



#2 "LES BERBÈRES"

Virgile Devin (3rd in the 2024 Ice Climbing World Cup standings), alongside Symon Welfringer, Esteban Daligault, and Baptiste Obino, during their fifth attempt on the North Face of Pré de Bar, narrated and illustrated by Engy Saint Ange.

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#3 "LES DRUS - DIRECTE AMÉRICAINE"

Coming late October. A legendary route: Annabelle Bouchardon's solo ascent of the Drus, brought to life in color by Clara Biel.

[RELEASE: LATE OCTOBER](#)



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About Decathlon

A global multi-specialist sports brand catering to everyone from beginners to elite athletes, DECATHLON is an innovative designer of sporting goods for all levels of practice. With 101,100 teammates and 1,817 stores worldwide, DECATHLON and its teams have been working since 1976 toward a continuous ambition: making the benefits of sport truly accessible to all.

About Simond

Based in Chamonix since 1860, Simond is an iconic brand in the field of mountain equipment. Specializing in mountaineering, climbing, trekking, and ski touring, Simond has a long-standing expertise in metalwork. In 2008, Simond joined the Decathlon group. The brand continues to design and manufacture all of its metal products (ice axes, crampons, carabiners) in its Chamonix factory. Its design teams apply their expertise to enhance equipment durability, ensuring technical and reliable products for demanding users.



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