SCARPA ATHLETE PIETRO VIDI MAKES FIRST REPEAT OF DRIFTER'S ESCAPE (9A+/5.15A TRAD) IN SQUAMISH

The Italian climber completes the second free ascent of the world's hardest trad climb after approximately 15 sessions and 10 lead attempts. To tackle the thin cracks of the Stawamus Chief, Vidi used SCARPA Blackbird climbing shoes.

Squamish (Canada), October 13, 2026 – SCARPA athlete **Pietro Vidi** has made the **first repeat of Drifter's Escape (9a+/5.15a)**, considered the world's hardest trad climb. The route is located on the **Stawamus Chief**, the imposing granite cliff overlooking Squamish, British Columbia.

First freed by American climber **Connor Herson** in **July 2025** after two seasons of effort, Drifter's Escape had remained unrepeated until Vidi's successful ascent. **Vidi completed the route after approximately 15 sessions** and 10 lead attempts, marking a significant milestone in trad climbing and providing an important benchmark for Herson's proposed grade of 9a+/5.15a.

Drifter's Escape: A technical challenge on the Stawamus Chief
Originally established as an aid climb in 1975, *Drifter's Escape* combines exceptionally technical climbing with the mental demands of placing traditional protection.

"The line is absolutely gorgeous, following two gently overhanging, parallel cracks towering above the city, offering some of the sickest grips around," says Vidi.

Despite his experience across some of the world's hardest boulders, trad routes and big walls, the SCARPA athlete found *Drifter's Escape* unusually demanding from a technical perspective.

“The climb is incredibly complex and technical in a way I've never experienced before. You need to be insanely precise with how you place every single finger on the crux pinches and cracks, and learn how to jam your toes into those thin pods. In classic Squamish style, it's impossible to just try hard. You need to let your body float.”

A turning point came when Vidi discovered **a no-hands rest midway through the route** and found an alternative sequence for the upper section that better suited his climbing style. Both proved decisive in bringing the complete ascent within reach.

SCARPA Blackbird: Precision and support at the highest level

To complete *Drifter’s Escape*, **Pietro Vidi chose SCARPA Blackbird climbing shoes**. The route demands a challenging combination of **precise toe jams in narrow cracks and accurate footwork on small edges**, making the choice of climbing shoes particularly important.

The result of **six years of research and development**, the Blackbird combines the **stability and precision of more structured climbing shoes** with enhanced **sensitivity on the rock**. At the heart of this innovation is a **3D-printed Pebax® midsole reinforced with carbon fiber**, designed to provide support and control even on micro-edges.

Fifteen sessions of problem-solving and risk management

As the sessions progressed, Vidi became increasingly immersed in the project.

“The process was a pretty tough one. It's been a while since I've put this many sessions into a project, and as usual, I got totally obsessed. This time was especially all-consuming. It felt like the Drifter was watching me from every angle of town. Everywhere I went, I could see the Chief and that curving white panel staring back at me.”

Beyond finding the most efficient sequences, the SCARPA athlete had to strike the right balance between conserving energy and managing risk, choosing to **place less protection than Connor Herson**.

“I opted to place less gear than Connor to save energy, making the first part more efficient but kind of scary, which resulted in some pretty shaky lead tries.”

Three falls near the top before the successful ascent

The final stage of the project tested Vidi's ability to manage pressure and wait for the right conditions. After working out the sequences needed to overcome the hardest sections, he came agonizingly close to completing the route on several occasions.

“On my second day of tries from the bottom, I unexpectedly stuck the last hard move, only to dry-fire right afterwards while going for the final hold. From there, the pressure started to build. I was very confident I could get it done soon, but a battle against conditions and my own mind began.”

On **October 13**, Vidi finally completed the route, bringing together the technical solutions he had developed throughout the project.

“After dropping that last move two more times, I finally found the perfect flow and mantled over the final ledge.”

A new milestone in trad climbing

With *Drifter’s Escape*, **Pietro Vidi adds another significant achievement to his climbing career**, already marked by ascents at the highest level across several disciplines.

His previous accomplishments include ***Tribe* in Cadarese**, ***Meltdown* and *Magic Line* in Yosemite**, as well as the **second free ascent of *Lurking Fear*** on El Capitan in 2025.

The first repeat of *Drifter’s Escape* further demonstrates the Italian climber's versatility and represents an important milestone in the progression of trad climbing, reinforcing **9a+/5.15a** as one of the highest levels of difficulty achieved in the discipline.

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About SCARPA

SCARPA was founded on the belief that No Place Too Far exists to be explored. A vision that reflects a deep respect for the mountains, and one that supports those who aim to turn every limit into a new benchmark. Craftsmanship and innovation come together to create footwear for every path, from everyday challenges to the most demanding peaks.

Grounded in a family-owned Italian heritage and a direct production chain, SCARPA has always invested in human relationships built on trust and mutual understanding. Every product is born from a real world need, interpreted with expertise to create high-performance, durable footwear. Authenticity, mountain culture and conscious innovation guide every decision—yesterday as much as tomorrow.

Founded in 1938 in Asolo, in the heart of Italy's Veneto footwear district, SCARPA is an international company specializing in footwear for mountaineering, climbing, trail running, trekking, hiking, outdoor lifestyle, ski mountaineering, and telemark. With offices in Italy, Germany, the United States, and China, and production facilities in Italy, Romania, and Serbia, SCARPA remains a reference point for those who experience nature as a source of freedom and adventure.

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