

#140

Sverre Fredheim

Born: 1908 Died: ?



Sverre Fredheim began jumping in the United States in 1930. He moved from Class "C" to the top of Class "A" in one year.

Sverre Fredheim was born in Gran, Hadeland, Norway, coming to the United States in 1927. Settling first in North Dakota, he moved to St. Paul, Minnesota, in 1930. Sverre's first job was at the Mounds Park Hospital in 1930. He heard of a ski meet being held at Mounds Park in St. Paul (a few blocks from the hospital). Calling the City Parks and Playgrounds Department, Sverre asked if it was all right to ski and when informed that it was, he joined the St. Paul Ski Club and entered the city championship. Winning the city title that year, Sverre started a jumping career which may never be equaled. His first "out of town" meet was at the old Glenwood slide in Minneapolis and he competed in Class "B." Sverre won the Class "B" title having the longest standing jump and set a new hill record of 147 feet.

A year later, in 1931, he competed in the Central U.S. Ski Jumping Championships at Canton, South Dakota, and won the Class "B" title and was elevated into Class "A." There was a special long standing event after the meet and Sverre won that, leaping 192 feet, not only surpassing the hill record but out jumping all Class "A." Due to the fact that Sverre was not as yet a citizen of the United States, he was ineligible for the Olympic Team.

In 1934, he won the Class "A" Central title at Devils Lake, North Dakota, and was second in the National Championships at Fox River Grove, Illinois. Upon winning the Central title, he defeated the national champion.

In 1935, Sverre became a United States citizen. At Canton, South Dakota, he again placed second in the National Championships. Later the same year, Sverre again defeated the national titleholder when he won the Olympic tryouts at Ecker Hill in Salt Lake City, Utah, and assured himself a berth on the U.S. Olympic Team. In 1935, Harold Grinden, historian for the CUSSA listed Fredheim as the number two jumper on a listing of the *All American Ski Jumpers*. The Central Championships were not held in 1935 due to bad weather.

In 1936, he represented the U.S. in the Olympics at Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany. Sverre placed highest of all American skiers and was 11th in the finals. In practice he made his longest leap of 283 feet at Garmisch but fell. The hill record is 281 feet. Fredheim's name is listed in *Who's Who*.

In 1937 upon his return from the Olympics, he won first place in eight meets in the Central Championships. He started out the season by setting the hill record as well as the Central hill record of 212 feet at Devils Lake, North Dakota.

In 1938, Centrals were again held in Soldier's Field, Chicago, and won by Birgir Ruud, the Olympic titleholder. Although Sverre did not repeat as a winner, he did have the longest leap of 162 along with Ruud. Sverre placed third in the Nationals at Brattleboro, Vermont, in 1938.

In 1939, Fredheim placed fourth in the Nationals which were held in St. Paul, Minnesota. He won the Central U.S. Class "A" title at New London, Wisconsin, for the third time and received the Governor Heil trophy at that meet. Sverre was selected to represent the United States in the 1940 Olympics in Finland. Unfortunately, the Olympics were not held due to the war.

In 1940, Sverre tied the hill record in St. Paul of 197 feet, which was set the previous year by Reidar Andersen of Norway.

In 1942, Fredheim residing on the West Coast, won the PNSA Class A championships. After the war in 1947 he again tried out for the Olympic team in Seattle, Washington. In Saturday's meet he placed fifth and on Sunday, to assure himself a berth on the team, came back to win first place with leaps of 260 and 262 feet. In the final tabulations he was third – at the age of 40!

In the 1948 Olympics at St. Moritz, Switzerland, he was second highest of the American skiers. He competed in several meets in Europe and was 2nd at Davos and 3rd at LaRosa, both in Switzerland.

Although eligible for the Veterans' class long before, he continued to compete in Class "A" and in 1951, at 44 years of age, placed 9th in the Olympic tryouts at Iron Mountain, Michigan. In 1955 after competing and winning in Class "A" since 1931, he moved into the Veterans' class.

Sverre Fredheim was elected to the U.S. National Ski Hall of Fame in 1973.