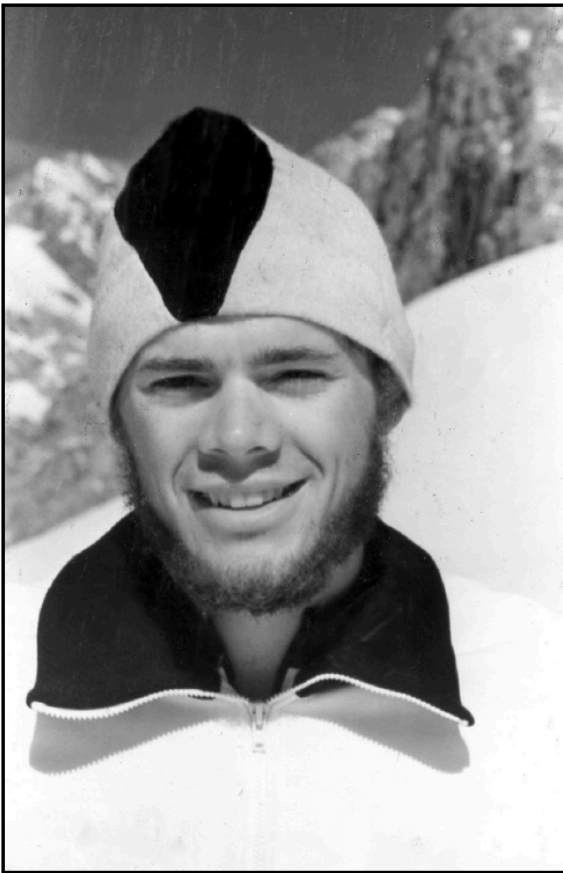


#185  
**William Koch**

**Born: 1955**



*Silver Medalist of the 30-kilometer in Innsbruck, Austria (1976), William “Bill” Koch became the first American ever to win an Olympic medal in cross-country skiing. Establishing himself as a top-rated international competitor, he was an inspiration for the rapidly expanding nordic ski programs of the United States Ski Association.*

Born June 7, 1955, Bill Koch is a product of the Eastern Ski Association.

Bill Koch’s sport is perhaps the most physically demanding sport in the world – tests have demonstrated that cross-country ski racers are among the best conditioned athletes in the world.

Koch has been working on skiing since his father put a pair of skis on his feet when he was three. Bill stated, “My brother Fritz and I would run to school and run back, or ski if there was snow, everyday beginning when I was 8 or 9. When I was 13, I began training seriously. Each year I got stronger, but you can only build up so much each year. It’s a gradual increase in strength that comes only through consistent training every day.”

Bill’s philosophy toward training reflects his love and respect for nature and his sport. “You must train with the elements in the same way you ski with them. The most important thing in training is to design a program for yourself that you can be happy

with – not just following what someone else has found works for them. Because 80 percent of racing is mental, the same is true for training. So you must be happy with what you’re doing, you must have fun or you won’t train. You know you’re in a progression of increased strength, you know what you want to do, so training is never a boring chore.”

When asked about the sport of skiing, Koch replied, “My sport is down to earth. It’s a man’s body and mind out on that course trying to make time. There are no shortcuts, no cheating. You get what you earn through many years of devoted training and through your respect for the beauty of the sport. It involves efficiency of motion, which is beautiful. It’s not just brute strength, but strength with grace. Plus, you’re outdoors, in contact with the elements, with nature, with the mountains. You must respect nature to race cross-country. To me, nothing is more thrilling than to watch a champion on film in slow motion having a helluva race. It’s amazing.”

Bill has compiled an impressive record competing on the U.S. Team and skiing in four Olympics: Innsbruck, Austria, 1976; Lake Placid, New York, 1980; Sarajevo, Yugoslavia, 1984; and Albertville, France, 1992. In 1982, he won the overall World Cup title.

Today, Bill lives in Hawaii with his wife Kate and son. Always innovated, Bill is now sand skiing on the beaches of Hawaii.

Bill Koch was elected to the U.S. National Ski Hall of Fame in 1976.



*Bill Koch sitting on his truck with friends. (Circa 1970s). For many children, the Bill Koch Ski League provided a first exposure to cross-country skiing.*