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## Anton Lekang

Born: 1904 Died: ?

*Anton Lekang was a ski jumping superstar who captured his first career tournament at the age of eight years while using a pair of barrel staves in a high school meet in his native Northern Norway.*

From that springboard, Anton Lekang won more than 50 major ski jumping prizes in Norway, Canada, and the United States. He set numerous hill records, winning a host of ladies' cups symbolic of graceful style and became U.S. Amateur champion in 1932. He designed great professional hills in sections of the country that had not been ski jumping territory and starred in their meets. He was a leader of the group which pioneered ski jumping at the Boston Garden, Madison Square Garden in New York, Philadelphia, and Pittsburgh.

However, Anton Lekang was more than a performer, a designer, a pioneer in the changing sports scene. He used his great talents to teach and set an example to many generations of youth. While at the height of his career, he designed and helped construct a trestle hill for the boys and girls of his adopted town in Northwestern Connecticut.

Then when a shattering leg injury ended his competitive career, he turned to downhill and slalom teaching at Yale University; at the famed Miss Porter's School in Farmington, Connecticut; at Saint Margaret's McTernan School in Waterbury, Connecticut; and at YMCA's and local ski schools. "His concern was always for the students and their safety," praised a Saint Marquette's official in a typical appraisal of his contribution. "As a human being he stands head and shoulders above most other men."

Lekang's early career in Norway was marketed by distinguished success. It was 1<sup>st</sup> place and the ladies' cup at Stokmarkness; 2<sup>nd</sup> place and the ladies' cup at Narvik; and 1<sup>st</sup> place and a new hill record at Svolver. At Bodo, he won the Northern Norway championship two years and the ladies' cup. At Moe-in-Rine, he took 1<sup>st</sup> place, the ladies' cup, and a set a hill record. In 1924, at famous Tonsberg, he was 2<sup>nd</sup> and picked to represent Northern Norway at the great Holmenkollen meet, where he had the longest jump of the day, 140 feet.

He later immigrated to the United States, and in the late 1920s began to make his presence felt.

Anton took 1<sup>st</sup> place at the Norseman Ski Hill in Salisbury Mills, New York; 1<sup>st</sup> in the Maine championship; and 1<sup>st</sup> and best jump and form at Sons of Norway in White Plains, New York. He was 1<sup>st</sup> in the 1931 Eastern Canadian Championship at Montreal, set a new hill record and was awarded the ladies' cup. He was 1<sup>st</sup> in the Olympic tryouts at Salisbury, Connecticut. He won the New York State Championship at the Norway Ski Hill in West Lebanon, New York. He was 4<sup>th</sup> in the national amateur at Chicago.

In 1932, Anton climbed to lasting glory – 1<sup>st</sup> place in the U.S. Amateur at Lake Tahoe, California. He was the first member of the fabled Norway Ski Club of New York to capture this honor. Then, he placed 2<sup>nd</sup> in the Eastern State Championships at Greenfield, Massachusetts; the longest jump and the ladies' cup at Seattle; and 2<sup>nd</sup> place and longest jump in the Cascade Ski Club meet at Portland, Oregon. In the 1932 Olympics, because he was still not a citizen, he had to settle for the honor of making the "first track" at Lake Placid – "one of the great moments of my life."

In 1933, Anton was New York State champion and 3<sup>rd</sup> in the nationals. In 1934, he turned professional. Lekang designed and supervised the construction of a great hill in Winsted, Connecticut, and ultimately made a magnificent leap of 230 feet to set a record. Next, came the design and construction of a trestle hill at Ayer, Massachusetts. It also was in 1934 that he set his career record, a leap of 266 feet at Salt Lake City, Utah. (Alf Engen then held the U.S. record of 282 feet.)

Anton was always the big attraction. He was in great demand and crisscrossed the country for exhibition appearances at major hills. When he was signed to jump at the Minot, North Dakota, hill, the promoter ran a big newspaper ad proclaiming: "LEKANG IS COMING!"

Anton Lekang was an exponent of the Narve Bonna style of ski jumping – slight bend at the hips, flat out over the tips of the skis, in perfect harmony with the hill. It was the forerunner of the "aerodynamic" style developed in the late 30s and 40s by the Kongsberg, Norway, school of jumpers. Lekang was the first to introduce it to this country, and it was a winning style.

Anton Lekang was elected to the U.S. National Ski Hall of Fame in 1977.