



#201

## Gregory Jones

Born: 1953

Information submitted in a nomination letter to the U.S. National Ski Hall of Fame

*Not everyone in Tahoe City, California, skis, but almost everyone does. One of the best skiers to emerge from this High Sierra town, located just a snowball's throw from the site of the 1960 Winter Olympics in Squaw Valley, is Greg Jones.*

Greg, at age 25, had become only the third American in the 40 years of Olympic and F.I.S. World Championship alpine ski competition to earn a medal. The Tahoe City skier joined Jimmy Heuga (bronze in slalom in the 1964 Olympics) and Billy Kidd (silver in slalom and bronze in combined in 1964) when he won a bronze medal in the F.I.S. Alpine Combined for his efforts at the 1976 Olympic Games in Innsbruck.

Some people were surprised at Jones' strong finishes at the Olympics (9<sup>th</sup> in giant slalom, 11<sup>th</sup> in downhill, and 19<sup>th</sup> in slalom), but those who follow ski racing could see it coming over a year before the opening of the Innsbruck Games. That's when the shy, then 22-year-old, became the first American to ever place as high as second in the European World Cup Giant Slalom event. That race was the giant slalom held at Madonna di Campiglio, Italy, and Greg finished second – after starting from the 37<sup>th</sup> position!

"This race will be a great confidence builder for me for the rest of the winter," Greg said after the race. And indeed it was.

Greg followed that historic showing with a 4<sup>th</sup> in the World Cup Giant Slalom in Sun Valley, Idaho, and a remarkable succession of three firsts in three straight Europa Cup GS races in the spring of 1975.

As the 1976 season approached, Greg was confident and "psyched up for the Olympics."

"You can make it go for yourself if you want it badly enough," Greg said of his chances before the games.

Evidently Greg wanted it badly enough, not only during the Olympics, but throughout the spring of '76 as well. He followed up his Innsbruck bronze medal effort with a victory in the World Cup giant slalom at Copper Mountain, Colorado, in March of 1976 – only the second victory ever for an American in the nine-year World Cup series. (Bob Cochran won the first at Heavenly Valley in 1973.)

Greg ended up ranked 7<sup>th</sup> in giant slalom in 1976 and was ranked first among American men. He also won the national championship in the downhill to top off his best year of competitive ski racing.

When you take into consideration Jones' earlier accomplishments, which included four years (1974-77) on the U.S. National "A" team, a National Junior Downhill Championship in 1972, selection to the NCAA All-American ski team as a freshman at the University of Colorado in 1973, participation in the F.I.S. World Championships in 1974, and a slalom title in the World Series of skiing in 1974, one might think Greg has already had a lifetime's worth of skiing. Not so, according to Jones.

"I got into ski racing very young," Greg said. "And something inside me has just driven me to want to ski race. My passion and love for ski racing has kept me doing it. I really enjoy it. I've never lost my interest in the sport at all, throughout the 14 or 15 years of it."

Jones' passion for ski racing had its seeds planted when Greg first strapped on a pair of skis at age five, and grew after his first ski race at age eight. Greg skied for the Lake Tahoe Ski Club and started out under the guidance of his father, "Bud" Jones, as well as Osvaldo Ancinas. (1960 Argentine Olympic Team)

At Truckee High School, Greg not only skied, but played football, baseball, and golf, and was his graduating class's valedictorian. It was about this time that Greg decided to concentrate wholly on skiing – not just during the winter, between football and baseball seasons – but all year around in order to become more "technically proficient" and "one of the top five skiers in the world."

At Innsbruck in 1976, he proved that he had attained that goal in the alpine combined.

Greg is married to Christiana Folger Jones. They have two daughters, Tiana Folger Jones and Allison Davis Jones, both accomplished ski racers.

Gregory Jones was elected to the U.S. National Ski Hall of Fame in 1978.

