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## Bill Johnson

Born: 1960

*Bill Johnson won three World Cup downhill, and in 1984, he was the Olympic Downhill Gold Medalist at Sarajevo – the first American skier to win an Olympic downhill medal.*

William Bill Johnson was born in Los Angeles, California, on March 30, 1960. Johnson was named to the United States Ski Team in 1982 as a down hill racer. This 23-year-old had the speed and the nerve for racing, but his technique was somewhat suspect. Johnson proved his daring and technique worked by becoming the United States Ski Association Downhill Champion in 1983 and 1984.

As a member of the United States Team that skied the 1984 Winter Olympics at Sarajevo, Yugoslavia, Johnson captured the Gold Medal in the premier event in the Games, the Olympic Downhill. This rather “brash” young man had boasted about what he was going to do on race day. Responding to an Austrian TV news team after his first training run, he said, “You can start writing your story. This course was designed for me, and everyone else is here to fight for second place.” He then went on and took the Gold Medal away from the much-favored Europeans, beating them at their own game! This, despite a delay in the race for nearly a week!

Somehow the wait did not get to Johnson’s nerves. He came back to the United States with the first Gold Medal ever won by an American man in Olympic downhill competition.

Bill left immediately after his Olympic victory so he could make the U.S.S.A. Nationals at Copper Mountain, Colorado, where he became the United States Downhill Champion as well as the Olympic medal holder.

Because of serious back and knee injuries, he failed to make the Olympic team in 1988. In April he had surgery and returned to training in mid-June. In 1990, he retired at the age of 29.

In 2001, Johnson began thinking seriously about a ski racing comeback. However, on March 22, 2001, he was critically injured in a tragic crash during a warm-up race for the U.S. Nationals at the Big Mountain Resort in Whitefish, Montana.

In a coma for three weeks, Bill made a slow recovery from his injuries. However, he did return to the slopes, skiing a couple of runs at Mount Hood, Oregon.

William “Bill” Johnson was elected to the U.S. National Ski Hall of Fame in 1984.

