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## Donna Weinbrecht

Born: 1965

Information taken from a nomination letter to the U.S. National Ski Hall of Fame – Sponsor: Paul Robbins

*Donna Weinbrecht won Olympic gold in 1992, has five World Cup championship titles, 46 individual World Cup wins, and is a seven-time U.S. champion.*

There were no bases in worldwide moguls competition that Donna Weinbrecht didn't touch during her travels on the international championship circuit where, time and again, she defined "champion" during her 14-year stretch on the U.S. Freestyle Ski Team. This constitutes, incidentally one of the longer stretches as a team member in any discipline. Donna was tough, she was good, and she had exceptional perseverance. In a discipline, moguls, where injuries are all too prevalent, Donna lost only one year to convalescence. Except for that year, she was out there banging through the bumps to the point that Weinbrecht and moguls were thought of as synonymous phenomena.

In spite of the fact that she dominated the moguls competitions in the mid-1990s, Donna started out as anything but a freestyle junior hopeful – far from it. Her route to the moguls was roundabout. Donna had skied since she was seven but not in any serious way. Moguls were for fun not a career. Her goals were to be a fashion designer and simultaneously to become a competitive figure skater. However, as she grew up in the late 1970s and early 1980s in West Milford, New Jersey, eventually figure skating became too expensive.

Then Donna's design school folded. That left her with skiing as a route to excellence, a route Donna's competitive nature was always seeking in one form or another. As a result, she decided to get serious about skiing. She spent the winter of 1985 at the family's vacation home near Killington, Vermont, and found herself entranced watching the freestylers tackle the bumps and decided to try it herself.

In her quiet but confident way, she taught herself how to run the moguls "by watching the guys." Donna watched well enough that she was soon taking local and then regional mogul competitions. Donna qualified for the U.S. championships in 1986 and 1987. In 1988, she was picked for the U.S. Freestyle Ski Team. At her third shot at the U.S. championships that year – the event was held just down the road at Stratton Mountain – Donna concluded her rookie season on the team by winning the national women's mogul title, an excellent start.

In 1987, Donna made the national team. In 1988, she was named Rookie of the Year. Park Smalley, then national head freestyle coach – Weinbrecht's first official mentor – recalls that "Donna's refrain was always, 'If the guys can do it, why can't I?'" As Smalley said, "Donna ignores the women; she doesn't watch them. 'D' patterns everything after what the guys are doing and how they do it."

Something worked for her. It was probably equal parts talent, determination and opportunity – she almost never bungled an opportunity. Smalley says, "There's nobody like Donna on the tour. Not even close." Until she tore her right ACL before the 1993 season, Weinbrecht, with her signature blond ponytail, was the yardstick by which women mogul competitors measured themselves.

A look at her winning record yields quite a road map to the peak of moguls world. Donna was a three time Olympian (1992 – Albertville, France, gold); 1994 – Lillehammer, Norway; and 1998 – Nagano, Japan. She was the World Championship gold medalist (1991 – Lake Placid, New York), twice World Championship silver medalist (1989 – Oberjoch, Germany; and 1997 – Nagano, Japan), and five-time World Cup mogul's overall champ (1990, 1991, 1992, 1994, 1996). She has a lifetime record of 46 individual World Cup wins (12 silver and 12 bronze). Donna has seven U.S. championships (1988, 1989, 1990, 1991, 1992, 1994, 1996).

Donna Weinbrecht was elected to the U.S. National Ski Hall of Fame in 2004.

