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Erich Sailer
Born: 1913

Successful athletes require successful coaches and when it comes to ski racing no coach can claim a record like Erich Sailer's. For 50 years the feisty Austrian has stood next to slalom courses tirelessly drilling alpine racers into world class competitors. His passion for our sport and his gift for teaching racers to go faster, have touched some 25,000 skiers including five of the women who represented the US team in Torino: Lindsey Kildow, Kristina Koznick, Julia Mancuso, Sarah Schleper and Resi Stiegler.

His quest to build better ski racers has been a year round job since 1956 when as a newcomer to the U.S., he pioneered summer ski racing on this continent with a camp at Timberline on Oregon's Mt. Hood. "I had to learn a lot," he admits. "We had 16 injuries in 20 days on the soft snow." He not only learned, he expanded, and by 1967 he launched a camp on the Bear Tooth Pass outside Red Lodge, Montana. It soon became the biggest ski racing camp in the country attracting 700 skiers in a forty day session.

But Sailer's greatest achievements have been in the Midwest, not on the mountains. In 1969 he came to Buck Hill or Buck Bump as the locals call it in Burnsville, Minnesota. The 45 member ski team had never won a race but within a year, four racers were headed to the Junior Nationals. "That's when I said I'm going to put somebody on the US Ski Team from the flatlands," remembers Sailer. True to his mission, 15 racers from Buck Hill have made that team and four have competed at the Olympics, including Lindsey Kildow and Kristina Koznick who represented the US in Torino.

While Sailer has helped thousands of skiers earn medals, he too has collected some prestigious awards. In 1998, he was the first to be honored as USSA's Development Coach of the Year and the USOC named him Ski Coach of the Year. In 2004, he was presented with the USSA's Tom Reynolds Lifetime Achievement Award.

Called the "Yoda of Ski Coaching," Sailer helped start the US Ski Coaches Ski Association, and even more important, he's inspired dozens of world class competitors to "pass it on" and also coach, including Karl Schranz, Pepi Gramshammer, Bill Marolt, Anderl Molterer, Billy Kidd and Andy Mill.

Above all, Erich Sailer proves that it's not the size of the mountain that makes champions; it's the commitment to excellence.

Erich Sailer was elected to the National Ski Hall of Fame in 2005.

