



## NOMINATION FORM

For

### HONORED MEMBERSHIP

In The

### U.S. SKI & SNOWBOARD HALL OF FAME

Candidate's Name: Sven Michael Coomer

Date & Place of Birth: Oct. 12, 1940 in Sydney, Australia

Address of Candidate: [REDACTED]

Telephone Number: [REDACTED]

Email: [REDACTED]

Is the candidate still living? If not, provide date and place of death: Yes

#### **Nominator information:**

Name: Seth Masia

Address: [REDACTED]

Telephone Number: [REDACTED]

Email: [REDACTED]

For what category are you nominating this candidate?

Athlete: \_\_\_\_\_

Snowsports Builder:  X

Heritage: \_\_\_\_\_

(See appendix one at the end of this form for category definitions)

**An 8 x 10 photograph of the candidate must be supplied:  X**

**State why the candidate merits election to the U.S. National Ski & Snowboard Hall of Fame (limit this statement to 250 words):**

**Sven Coomer: Father of the modern ski boot**

The man who made plastic ski boots work well is Sven Coomer. Before Coomer, plastic boots were narrow, badly padded and painful. Barely covering the ankle, they offered inadequate leverage to fully use the new generation of fiberglass slalom skis. The term “Lange bang” described the common experience.

Coomer, a university-trained product designer, trained with the French ski team. In 1969, under contract to Nordica, he set out to create the ideal slalom racing boot. Beginning in 1971, he launched a series of revolutionary boots that established the pattern for every high-performance ski boot built since then. Coomer-designed boots fit precisely and comfortably, and introduced the removable liner that adapted readily to the skier’s foot. He created the integral high-back “spoiler” to set the ankle in its strongest position and enable full leverage in powering modern race skis. He designed three-piece race boots, including models still in production today. He invented the power strap that closes the cuff on all modern high performance boots. All these innovations were immediately successful in World Cup and Olympic racing and were imitated by boot factories around the world.

Coomer went on to invent the custom-built footbed, and trained a generation of retailers in the new art of custom boot fitting.

Sven Coomer brought comfort and ski-control power to millions of skiers worldwide. He showed the way forward for an entire industry, and is justly regarded by that industry as its best and most prolific designer.

**In chronological order by year, list the candidate's achievements:**

Here's what skiing writer Jackson Hogen said about Sven Coomer in an article for *Skiing History Magazine*: "Modern ski boots don't just echo [Coomer's] designs, they're based on them."

**1950s**

**1956** – At age 16, Sven Coomer competes in the Summer Olympics for his native Australia, in the Modern Pentathlon.

**Late 1950s** – Sven attends university in Sweden, studying product design. Invited to compete in Winter Pentathlon, he learns cross-country skiing.

**1960s**

**Spring Break 1960** – Sven tries alpine skiing for the first time, at Åre, Sweden.

**1961** – Sven talks his way into training with the French national ski team. The French allow him to train with the team again in 1964.

**1963** – Sven begins teaching with the Austrian Ski School in Thredbo, Australia. This turned him from an amateur athlete into a skiing professional, and began his career as an influential instructor and coach.

**1965** – Sven begins consulting on shoe design for Puma. He was hired to help the company take advantage of new materials for shoemaking and adjust its line to work on man-made track-and-field and stadium surfaces like Tartan rubber and AstroTurf.

**1965-66** – Sven is hired to direct the PSIA experimental ski school in Solitude, Utah.

**1966-69** – Sven spends three winters as the ski school director at Mt. Rose and Slide Mountain, Nevada. While there, he coaches the McKinney kids, including a very young future Olympic gold medalist named Tamara McKinney

**1967-69** – Sven is one of the original ski testers for *SKIING* magazine, working with editor Doug Pfeiffer each spring to rate new equipment.

**1968** – Sven is hired by Norm Macleod of Beconta, the U.S. distributor of Nordica and Puma products, and begins designing ski boots for elite racers.

**1970s**

Sven Coomer becomes the most important ski boot designer in the world, working for Nordica, which captured more than 30% of the worldwide ski boot market with his designs. He also introduced orthotics into ski boots, through Superfeet. His boot designs and design criteria remain the basis for most ski boots on the market today.

Sven used his Nordica leather boot designs to standardize the spoilers – the higher, stiffer back on ski boots – with a counter-balancing and higher, plastic-reinforced tongue to



create a balanced flexing action. The purpose: limit range of motion in the ankle for better balance, control and power on modern skis.

**1970-71** – Sven designs the Sapporo, Nordica's last important leather boot. Spanish racer Francisco "Paquito" Fernández Ochoa skied in a pair of Sapporos during his 1972 Olympic gold medal slalom runs.

Sven uses his work on the Sapporo as the design basis for the first successful plastic boot by Nordica, the Olympic. He also designs the Astral Slalom, which become the wildly popular "banana" boot. These designs introduce the removable, customizable innerboot, launching the art of ski boot custom fitting.

**1972** – Sven introduces the five-buckle Nordica Grand Prix, an instant favorite among World Cup racers. The Grand Prix was a favorite among elite racers for over three decades. Its evolutionary descendents remain in production.

**1973** – Sven connects with Dr. Chris Smith and Dennis Brown to launch Superfeet, introducing custom orthotics to ski boots. It's a huge step forward for ski boot comfort and ski control.

In the early 1970s, Sven was also inspired by Peter Kennedy to create custom, mechanically-mixed and injected foam liners for ski boots.

**1974** - Sven streamlines the Grand Prix with four wide cable buckles that spread buckling forces evenly across "mushroom" capstans molded into the shell and cuff, the equivalent of eight anchor points compared to five with conventional buckles. This eliminated rigid metal parts, especially over the instep and in front of the shins.

**1976** – Sven designs the Nordica Comp-3, his last Nordica model as the principal product manager and designer. This project was the first of Nordica's many "open throat" or three-piece shell models – what bootmakers would much later call a "cabriolet."

Sven adapts the Comp-3 design to prototype the popular Raichle Flexon, still sold today after 35 years, under K2's Full Tilt brand.

**1978** – Sven moves his family to Mammoth, and in 1979 opens Footloose Sports, where he continues his work on perfecting Superfeet orthotics, boot fitting tools and better boot liners. He also uses Birkenstock cork to create the Skithotic, the first molded footbed that could be created in the ski shop.

Sven begins training a generation of retail boot fitters, across the country and around the world, in the new specialty trade of custom boot fitting.

### **1980s**

Sven continues working with major ski boot manufacturers, and on liner designs. His work with San Marco (and Head, after that company bought the San Marco factory) made them two of the top brands in the industry. His invention of the silicone injection liner, which eliminated the need to use more toxic and less resilient foam liners, was revolutionary. In the late 1980s, Sven invented the Zipfit, the first custom liners that could be sold off the shelf and fitted without unwieldy machinery or hazardous materials.



**1980-'82** – Sven consults with Koflach on its product overhaul. Koflach becomes worldwide distributor for Superfeet. (Koflach would later become Atomic ski boots.)

**Mid-1980s** – Sven consults with San Marco and Munari at the Brixia Factory in Montebelluna, Italy in development of unique rear entry and overlap design boot models that featured an inner shell attached to the inside wall of the shell. Skiers were able to transmit enormous power and control over the ski.

**1984-89** – Sven develops and patents silicone injection liners, introduced at Footloose as the Silicone Personalization System (SPS).

**1986-89** – San Marco and Munari distribute SPS worldwide. San Marco boot sales take off thanks to custom SPS liners. Head purchases the San Marco factory and markets the SPS system under the Head brand, which brings the company back into the ski boot business.

**1989** – Sven introduces ZIPFIT (Zero Injection Pressure Fitting), the first custom liners that don't require unwieldy injection machinery, or hazardous materials.

### **1990s (and beyond)**

By launching Zipfit at the end of the 1980s, Sven creates an aftermarket ski boot liner that continues to enjoy considerable success, both in the U.S. and other countries. Through his work at Zipfit, Sven develops a resilient and durable cork composite liner-fitting material. He develops medial edge support that is the basis for Zipfit's current success with the SideWinder model. He invents the Hot Gear Bag. And Sven plays an instrumental role in designing the Atomic Hawx, which becomes the most popular ski boot in the world.

**1995** – Sven's company, Zipfit, introduces the first SideWinder model, which creates medial edge support for skiers, especially in front-entry overlap boots.

**1997** – Sven develops and begins using a cork composite to replace silicone injection as the basis for his liner fitting material in Zipfits. Using liners made in Italy with leather and Neoprene, Zipfit carves out a name for itself at several major ski shops in Mammoth, Park City, Snowbird, Winter Park and elsewhere.

**1998** – Sven designs the Hot Gear Bag, which becomes a staple for ski racers and many recreational skiers.

**1999** – Sven, with his partner Hans Martin Heierling, begins development and design of the flexible-sole iFlex system. Atomic licenses the concept and Sven used it to design the Atomic Hawx series. This becomes one of the most popular ski boots in the world.

The iFlex then became the basis and essence for the Redster race boot used by World Cup champions Mikaela Shiffrin and Marcel Hirscher.

**2000** – The Nordica Doberman is introduced, based on key features of Sven's 1972 Grand Prix. It becomes a favorite among elite racers during the first decade and a half of the 21st century.

**2016** – Sven continues to be active and influential as a ski boot design consultant, and continues to perfect the Zipfit liner. Recent developments include the redesigned SideWinder and the Stealth line-up, featuring a dimpled rubber exterior to bond and eliminate chaffing and improve the stability and sensitivity between the plastic shell outer and the liner/inner boot.



**On one page provide additional data, anecdotes, etc. that you feel are pertinent to this nomination:**

Sven Coomer has played a quiet role advising and working some of the world's top ski racers, including Jean Claude Killy and Ingemar Stenmark, arguably the greatest racers of the 1960s and 1970s.

With Killy, Sven's real role was that of a confidant at a critical moment in the Frenchman's racing career. It was 1964, and the coaches on the French National Team told a 21-year-old Killy it was time for him to get serious or step off the team.

Killy requested a meeting one afternoon with Sven in Val d'Isère. Killy sought Sven's advice because of his experience as an Olympian in the 1956 summer games, and his relationship with the French ski team, which Sven had trained with in 1963-64. When Sven asked Killy what he wanted to do as a skier and athlete, Killy told him: "I want to win three gold medals in Grenoble, like Tony Sailer did in Cortina."

Sven suggested that Killy think of this goal as a documentary film that begins with him receiving the third of the gold medals, and plays his success backward to his beginnings in the sport.

Killy then asked Sven what he thought of skiers as athletes. "I told him, 'Really primitive,'" Sven recalls. They talked about Sven's preparation training for the modern pentathlon: From getting into the right frame of mind, to overcoming nerves, to warming up fully ahead of competition, to practicing the start of a race.

"With running and swimming you practice the start over and over to get off the blocks with maximum velocity," Sven recalls. "I told him skiing should be the same, but it wasn't. I said you don't want to mess around for three turns before you get your speed."

Killy subsequently invented the flying start out of the starting gate, where he leapt up out of the start and landed two meters down the hill with considerable momentum. "Jean Claude raised the standards," Sven says. The Frenchman also went on to win three gold medals at Grenoble.

Sven was always available to work with athletes. With Stenmark, Sven spent an afternoon making adjustments to his boots, helping the champion achieve a fit that allowed him to perform at a top level.

"I met in the hotel room" Sven recalls. "I spent about three hours working on his boots. He knew exactly what he wanted, but didn't know how to make it happen. I used plastic wedges that tilted the heel out a few degrees, and reduced the amount of roll before he had an edge."

Sven had similar encounters in that era with Gustav Thöni, Erwin Strickler, and Spider Sabich, and others.

**Please list the names and addresses of those people who are supporting this nomination (Minimum of three - limit six):**

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**Please provide a list of sources for visual material that can be used at the candidate's induction presentation:**

**Print sources**

- *Skiing History* magazine
- *SKI* Magazine
- *SKIING* Magazine
- *Ski Business*
- *Skiing Trade News*

**Video sources**

- The Lift at the Wheeler (Aspen) <https://vimeo.com/120840595>
- Innsbruck to Grenoble (Haute Route) <http://www.grassrootstv.org/archive/ski-bum-theater-hot-roots-with-sven-coomer-and-rollie-towover>
- Getty Images (young Sven) <http://www.gettyimages.com.au/detail/video/sven-coomer-shows-women-skiers-preseason-exercises-and-news-footage/594655239>



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Signature of nominator

Mail completed nomination form to: U.S. Ski & Snowboard Hall of Fame, P.O. Box 191, Ishpeming, MI 49849 or email to: [administrator@skihall.com](mailto:administrator@skihall.com)

**Appendix One:  
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Definitions of Categories.**

Note: These categories have been developed to assist the Selection committee and National Voting Panel in the review and fair election process of Honored Members.

1) Athletes

Candidates are recognized in a wide range of skiing and snowboarding disciplines for their national and international accomplishments. Candidates will be recognized for their specific athletic accomplishments or exploitation of their athleticism. They must have achieved the highest levels possible in their discipline. Consideration must also be given to the candidate's contribution to the promotion and development of their particular discipline. Candidates may be considered from any of the categories listed. Nomination documents must speak directly to the accomplishments in the specific category. Up to six candidates will be accepted for the ballot with at least two and up to four selected, based on the achievement of 50% of the votes cast.

Minimum criteria for consideration as a candidate:

- Olympic or Paralympic medallist
- FIS or IPC World Championship medallist
- X Games medallist in skiing or snowboarding
- Top-three finish in a FIS or IPC World Cup event.
- Athletes who competed prior to modern-day World Cup or comparable tours who distinguished themselves as notable international athletes for their achievements in the most recognized events of their time.
- Freeride or big mountain athletes who achieved the highest level of national or international notoriety related to their athletic accomplishments

- Professional skiers in alpine, snowboarding or speed skiing who consistently won events or placed in the top three in season standings on professional tours.

2) Snowsports Builders

Candidates in this category must have been involved at a significant level in ski or snowboard sports. Candidates must have had a clear national impact for their contribution and be widely known for their work. Candidates' qualifying experience must have been achieved as an individual, but may have been in conjunction with work with an organization.

3) Heritage

Candidates in this category must have been retired from their qualifying activity for 25 years or have participated in it for at least 25 years. The category is open to Olympic Athletes, Non-Olympic Athletes or Sport Builders. Candidates must have satisfied the criteria of one of the three categories in order to be considered as a candidate in the heritage category. A member of the Selection Committee or a member of the Board of Directors must sponsor each candidate.

The Heritage category may include candidates whose previous candidacies were unsuccessful. In such cases their previous candidacies may not have come before the Selection Committee for at least five years. A member of the Selection Committee or a member of the Board of Directors must sponsor each candidate.

