

Scott Brooksbank

An ultimate professional, the multi-talented Brooksbank 'took freestyle to a new level' as athlete, coach, and organizer.

Fellow freestyle legend John Clendenin calls Scott Brooksbank "the most decorated freestyle skier in history." During the sport's 1970s heyday, with tour names and titles changing regularly, the consensus is that Brooksbank won five world titles, made more than 40 podium appearances, and perhaps most notably collected multiple titles in all three of freestyle's widely diverse disciplines: moguls, aerials, and ballet. Even in the freewheeling, ever-evolving, oft-debated first decade of the renegade sport, one thing was certain: No one could match Brooksbank's commitment to success.

"He took freestyle to a new level," says Clendenin, who has deployed Brooksbank as a master coach at his Aspen-based Clendenin Method camps for the past few decades. "He trained harder, he was more fit, more disciplined, and more dedicated than any other competitor. If we wanted to compete in Scott's world, we all had to take it up a notch. [He brought] the ultimate meaning of the word 'professional' to our sport."

Brooksbank did collect what was considered the biggest prize of all, a Chevrolet Corvette for winning the first big international contest at Vail in 1972, and thinks he won "four or five cars" in total during his career, though he's not absolutely certain. He never kept the cars anyway—he was too young and too broke to afford the insurance for such pricey and powerful vehicles.

Brooksbank came late to skiing, and had to outwork the field to rise to the top. It was in 1970 that he dropped out of the University of Minnesota, where he had been a walk-on diver on the swim team. That gymnastics-type background, plus trips in his youth to Afton Alps and other local areas, was his entire ski foundation when he showed up in the Vail Valley, working two or three jobs to pay the rent. His appetite for learning was insatiable, and in jeans he chased the best skiers on the mountain for advice, including fellow Hall of Famers Hermann Gollner (who would ask, "Why you follow me?") and PSIA pioneer Horst Abraham.

Beginning as an unbalanced, backseat slider, Brooksbank was soon pressuring the front of his boots, always "leading with the uphill toe," and developing the technical skills that made him a standout on the freestyle circuit. He realized early that the best, fastest mogul lines were with skis on the snow, not in the airborne, elongated comma that might draw applause from onlookers but wasn't sustainable. Along with Mark Stegemeir, he recruited Ohio State's legendary gymnastics coach, Charlie Pound, to hold clinics for aerial judges and they also instituted athlete qualifying, all to improve scoring and safety. Brooksbank worked overtime to catch up on ballet maneuvers. Ongoing issues with shin splints and frost-bitten toes led him to engage boot pioneer Sven Coomer, and together they found his perfect match with a women's World Cup boot (he had extremely small, size-7 feet).

Starting with the 1972 Chevrolet Exhibition Skiing Championships, where he won the moguls, combined and the Corvette, Brooksbank went on to compile an overwhelming record in all three

events. In 1976, *Ski Racing* named him International Freestyle Skier of the Year, and he was *Skiing's* pick as Men's Freestyle Skier of the Year.

Brooksbank started coaching at Airborne Eddie Ferguson's Freestyle Camps in 1972 and never stopped the mentoring, also lending a hand at the Dynastar Freestyle Camps and Fuzzy Garhammer Camp. He skied on various demo teams and exhibition tours in spreading the freestyle mantra globally: On the Marlboro team headed by Annie Famose, in the Expowinter Ski Tour, and in the Harry Leonard ski shows. He was featured in more than 25 ski films or videos, including a half-dozen Warren Miller films, where his tight, ferocious bump lines so enamored the film crew they had to resist running too much Brooksbank footage in their movies. He scored five *SKI* and *Skiing* covers. In 1993, he launched the Ski with the Legends program at Northstar in California, banking on the concept that there were plenty of Baby Boomers who grew up idolizing the '70s freestylers who would want to ski with their childhood heroes, and he was right. He kept on going as a coach and athlete in the 1980s and '90s, mentoring a junior national champion as the director of Freestyle Skiing at Sunday River in 1990 and 1991 and competing in the Legends of Freestyle from '92-'96.

Through all the titles, podiums and cars won, Brooksbank cites his organizational role in the late 1970s, as insurance concerns grounded the once-lucrative U.S. tours, as the highlight of his career. He was a board member of the Freestyle Skiers of America and worked to put together the World Cup Freestyle Tour, with events primarily in Europe and Canada. It provided the critical bridge to freestyle becoming part of

the FIS World Cup tour starting with the 1980-81 season, and with moguls finally joining the Olympic family at the 1992 Albertville Games.

Brooksbank, who will be 70 at his induction, still skis and occasionally teaches today, living in Salt Lake City. He has two grown children.

### Career Accomplishments

1972: Grand National Champion in combined and moguls at the Vail Chevrolet Exhibition Skiing Championships.

1973: Won combined title at the Rocky Mountain and Waterville Valley freestyle championships.

1974: Won the aerials at Sun Valley and Jackson Hole, ballet at Aspen Highlands, and moguls at Waterville Valley.

1975: Capped off a seven-win season with the combined title at the World Freestyle Championships in Snowbird.

1976: Won seven events in the U.S. and Europe and was *Ski Racing's* International Freestyle Skier of the Year, *Skiing's* Men's Freestyle Skier of the Year.

1978: Scored two wins and 10 podiums as the tour moved primarily to Europe and Canada.

1980-81: In the inaugural season of FIS World Cup freestyle, landed five podiums and finished second overall for the season.

1984: Won the Powder 8s in Wanaka, New Zealand, with partner Scot Schmidt

2001: Honored by the Utah Ski Archives as one of the Pioneers of Freestyle Skiing.

Born: Feb. 28, 1950 (Denver)