

US HOF 2021 Inductee Bio

John Eaves

Multi-talented 'Eaveman' elevated freestyle, winning 42 titles across all events, then soared as a Bond stuntman, a Bogner star, filmmaker, musician, and coach.

The true testament to John Eaves' diverse talents is that despite winning 42 international freestyle titles and thrice being crowned *Skiing's* Freestyle Skier of the Year, he is most widely known for an oft-horizontal high-speed caper on skis through the Cortina Olympic bobsled track in the 1981 James Bond classic, "For Your Eyes Only." No wonder: The clip has been viewed an estimated one billion times.

Eaves entered the freestyle scene in the mid-1970s with extremely strong genes. Both his mother, two-time Olympian Rhoda Wertele, and his aunt, Rhona Wertele, dominated alpine racing in the 1940s and '50s and are enshrined in Ishpeming as well as a slew of Canadian ski halls. Besides his freestyle success in the late 1970s, the "Eaveman" carved a unique path as a stuntman, Bogner star and ambassador, composer, musician, filmmaker, coach and philanthropist.

Born in Montreal on April 8, 1953, Eaves made his first turns on Mt. Royal before he could even walk, then nurtured his talents in the Laurentians, racing alongside Ken Read while also pursuing a love of music. The latter included borrowing his mom's car, just after turning 16, to attend (in its entirety) a "little folk festival" down in Woodstock, N.Y. He fell in love with the vibe, and grew his hair even longer.

Ideally equipped with training as a gymnast and diver, he found his own vibe in freestyle, choosing to join the freestyle festival rather than pursuing a cinematography degree. He was first drawn by watching K2's "The Performers" movie and by following the exploits of early stars Wayne Wong, Bob Salerno and John Clendenin, the athletes he would soon befriend, emulate, and then beat. (When Eaves had coffee breaks while loading lifts at Whistler, Wong generously gave him trick tips.) Eaves may have had a late start, but he

caught up quickly through sheer strength, athleticism, and a work ethic to always get better.

Best known as a “godfather of aerals” who pioneered new methods for off-snow training, he was actually a true all-rounder, winning roughly 10 mogul titles with a natural, attacking stance that is still a marvel to watch today in You Tube clips. “John’s powerful yet graceful style was emulated in years to come by Scot Schmidt and Glen Plake, among many others,” Chris Davenport recalls.

Looking to bolster his ballet routine, Eaves decamped to Nashville each fall, composing and performing the arrangement that would accompany his ballet runs (with help from Johnny Cash’s award-winning producer). Skiing to his own music further sparked Eaves’ passion for ballet, and he won multiple titles in that discipline as well.

Early in his career, Eaves travelled down to Newport, Vt., to meet Willy Bogner, the ex-alpine star and head of the eponymous skiwear company that was an early supporter of freestyle. A longtime admirer of Bogner and the brand, Eaves momentarily lost his composure, blurting out that he would one day be the world freestyle champion. “He believed me,” chuckles Eaves.

This began many decades of collaboration with Willy Bogner, who enlisted Eaves as the lead performer in multiple Fire + Ice productions. Eaves’ often-hilarious roles ranged from him posing as a never-ever hanging from a chairlift and then straddling pine trees on the way down to nail-biting descents and leaps of faith on skis or a snowboard. “He was doing (stuff) that I wouldn’t do, and he was 44 at the time,” the late Shane McConkey recalled in 1999.

Bogner also introduced Eaves to the Bond crew, and he became particularly close to director John Glen. Eaves was brought on as stuntman for Roger Moore, who just happened to injure his ankle during the Cortina shoot. With the star sidelined, the Bond franchise’s creative talent, from the director to all four camera crews, focused for three weeks on Eaves’ epic bobsled run. (Eaves went on to become something of a bobsled connoisseur, eventually skiing four other Olympic tracks, and believing to this day that holding an edge on pure ice at 60 mph is the ideal training for ski racers.)

Later, Eaves served as a stuntman for Jackie Chan (whom he later taught to snowboard), Leslie Nielsen, and Morgan Freeman, and filmed Richard Branson on a CMH

heli-trip. While Eaves' competitive career came before freestyle was accepted into the Olympic family, as a freestyle tour board member he lobbied hard for its inclusion. When the sport had its demonstration debut in 1988 at the Calgary Games, one of his students won the aerial gold, and Eaves provided commentary on CTV. Eaves was an early and exceptional snowboarder, as well as a paraglider, hang glider, cliff jumper, and windsurfer, talents that were often showcased in Bogner films. He enjoyed a long relationship with Olin skis, and helped design the Olin Mark IV, a legendary mogul ski that was a top seller for several seasons (John's pair were serial number "007").

Eaves worked with Ethel Kennedy and Maria Shriver to raise money for the Special Olympics via the Bogner films being shown in the U.S. Just after 9/11 in November 2001, the Bogner tour's New York City stop, with an assist from Pink, raised money for the children who lost their parents in the attack.

Today, Eaves and his wife Bridgette, who he has been with since 1969, split their time between Fiji and Calgary. His work producing adventure sports documentaries for groups and individuals has taken him around the world, chronicling trekking, climbing, diving, motorcycle tours and heli-skiing. The latter includes many visits to CMH lodges, where he also plays the music for après ski.

Career Accomplishments

Born: April 8, 1953 (Montreal, Canada)

1977-1979: Reigns as *Skiing's* Freestyle Skier of the Year for three straight years.

1977: Earns World Grand Prix Freestyle Skiing men's combined title.

1978. Repeats as combined champion and wins aerials, too.

1979: Three-peats in combined and repeats in aerials.

1980: Wins aerial title again.

1981: Stars in Cortina bobsled chase scene in "For Your Eyes Only" as stuntman for Roger Moore, in one of Bond's most viewed segments.

1988: Enters Canadian Ski Hall of Fame, produces and skis in his own film, "Skiers Dream."

1993: Earns entry into Laurentian Ski Hall of Fame.

1995: Doubles for Jackie Chan in "First Strike," snowboarding off a cliff and grabbing the skids of a hovering helicopter.