

U.S. Ski and Snowboard Hall of Fame

2021 Inductee

Mike Hattrup

Hattrup opened eyes in “Aahhh’s,” then spent three decades developing products for skiers to safely, skillfully access big mountains, backcountry.

Of the three skiers who changed the world in Greg Stump’s seminal 1988 movie “Blizzard of Aahhh’s,” Mike Hattrup is certainly the least known, sort of the “quiet Beetle.” While rock stars Glen Plake and Scot Schmidt parlayed their growing fame as professional skiers into decades of big mountain prominence, “Everyman” Hattrup methodically broke his own trail, helping develop the products (from skis and apparel to skins, packs, shovels, and probes) that allowed a broad swath of skiers to experience the thrill of big mountains and the backcountry.

When the “Aahhhs” party arrived wide-eyed in Chamonix with the idea of exporting the extreme freedom of the Alps to slope-locked skiers back in the “land-of-the-lawyer” U.S., the stars aligned. Particularly at the summit of the famed Aiguille du Midi cable car at some 13,000 feet, which accessed terrain unlike anything in the U.S.

“I was so green when I got off that tram,” recalls Hattrup, whose prior experience was confined to shredding mogul runs. “I’d never skied out of bounds, never skied with a beacon, never worn a harness.” Soaking up advice from guide Murray Bell, the trio found another gear in this risky habitat, captivating audiences worldwide. Hattrup, who grabbed his fair share of footage with strong, quick, and balanced attack lines, essentially spent the next three-plus decades of his life ensuring that those who followed him would be better equipped and prepared.

Hattrup has worked with more than a half-dozen hard- and softgoods companies, most notably K2, to innovate, market and sell breakthrough adventure gear. For these diverse contributions, *POWDER* named Hattrup as one of the “Most Influential 48 Skiers of Our Time” in 2006 (this after bequeathing him as one of the “Best 50 Skiers in North America” in 1998). At *Backcountry*, the magazine inducted him into its Hall of Fame.

Born Aug. 7, 1962, in Seattle, Hatstrup started skiing at age 11, at nearby Alpental. His volume increased when the family bought a ski cabin at Crystal Mountain, and then truly accelerated when he realized he could take winter quarters off while (slowly but surely) pursuing a marketing communications degree at the University of Washington. He would spend those winters in Sun Valley (it would become his permanent home), Squaw Valley, Steamboat, Winter Park and Vail, as part of a mogul-bashing group that dubbed itself the Goon Squad. His devotion and results led him up the ladder to a spot on the U.S. Freestyle Ski Team, though a knee injury derailed that dream.

Mogul skiing also led him to Stump, another national-caliber freestyle skier, and it was Hatstrup who eventually introduced Plake to the director, setting the stage for “Aahhh’s.” (Stump, Plake and Schmidt have all been enshrined in Ishpeming). Hatstrup would appear in five Stump films, from 1985’s “Time Waits for Snowman” to 1990’s “Dr. Strangeglove,” along with three Warren Miller productions: 1991’s “Born to Ski” and then in two return-to-Chamonix segments (in 2003’s “Journey” and in 2014’s “No Turning Back”).

In 1988, Hatstrup entered the hardgoods world as a product manager at K2. It was the beginning of a career in which he would build the rarest of skill sets: as an athlete, certified guide, marketer, sales executive, product manager and innovator, and ultimately director. Also uncommon, he would work in three diverse categories (hardgoods, softgoods, accessories). Hatstrup championed the first extreme ski, the K2 Extreme, which became the company’s best-selling model. He played a role in development of the first widely embraced (and game-changing) shaped ski, the K2 Four (Hatstrup quickly adopted the Four footprint to the Totally Piste model for the K2 Telemark/Randonnée division that he had just launched).

Hatstrup also birthed the K2 Backside division, producing skis, skins, probes, shovels, and packs. Over three-plus decades, he’s helped lead innovation at K2, Kästle, and Fischer, plus aided the efforts at apparel companies Marmot and Outdoor Research.

In August 2021, Hatstrup was named to oversee Black Diamond’s ski division as its Business Unit Director. His role through the years has been to understand the market and the products it needs, and then to work with engineers to build it. “I’m usually the dumbest

guy in the room,” he laughs, “but I usually know the market better than anyone.” He knew, from experience, the different fit, function and performance needs of backcountry vs. freeride apparel that Marmot or Outdoor Research produced; that placing holes in the tips and tails of K2 Backside skis allows them to be repurposed for a backcountry evacuation sled; and that centimeter marks on probe poles, a K2 innovation, are invaluable for accurate snowpack study.

Through his entire career, Hatstrup steadfastly maintained his home base in Sun Valley, prioritizing a ski-and-family lifestyle. He and his wife, Claudia, raised two hard-skiing children who are now young adults, Axel and Isabella.

Hatstrup says the “Aahh’s” ski action is child’s play compared to what big mountain skiers do today (and have done for the past couple of decades), but the movie knocked down the ski adventure door. He still gets stopped on the street by strangers quoting lines from the movie, people who say they quit their jobs to move to the mountains. “Don’t blame me for your bad decisions,” Hatstrup laughs.

Career Accomplishments

Born: Aug. 7, 1962 (Seattle)

1985: Debuts in Greg Stump’s “Time Waits for Snowman.”

1987: Earns spot on U.S. Freestyle Ski Team

1988: Stars in Stump’s “Blizzard of Aahhh’s.”

1988: Enters the gear world as product manager for K2, works on K2 Extreme.

1989: Skis in Stump’s “License to Thrill.”

1995-2008: Serves as design board member and athlete for Marmot.

1996-2008: Leads new K2 Telemark/Randonnée division, grows it to No. 1 market share in segment.

1999: Receives AMGA Ski Mountaineering Guide Certification.

2009-2013: Serves as brand consultant for Outdoor Research, helping conceive new Sidecountry line.

2009-15: Directs launch of K2 Backside.

2014: Skis in Warren Miller's "No Turning Back."

2016-2021: Becomes U.S. Alpine Product Manager for Fischer skis.

2021-Present: Assumes role as Business Unit Director: SKI for Black Diamond.