

KASHIWA, HANK (690 words)

After winning the 1975 World Pro Skiing Championship, Olympian Hank Kashiwa used the skills he learned as a pro ski racer to parlay his success and passion for skiing into a thriving career as an entrepreneur in the ski industry. Together with brother Bucky, he founded Volant, which became the largest American ski manufacturer with its innovative stainless steel cap. He went on to help lead marketing efforts for Montana's Yellowstone Club, the world's first private ski and golf community, which grew to more than 875 families in its private membership.

Born in New York City, Kashiwa moved to Old Forge, N.Y. when he was two, discovering skiing on nearby McCauley Mountain. As a young boy growing up in the Central Adirondacks, he found his passion for ski racing early on. He was just 17 when Coach Bob Beattie named him to the U.S. Ski Team during a summer training camp in Portillo. A year later, he was an alternate for the 1968 Olympic Winter Games in Grenoble, narrowly missing a teenage Olympic debut. In 1969, he won a U.S. title.

Kashiwa skied on the fledgling World Cup tour from 1968 to 1971, earning six top-10 finishes. A stint at Fort Dix with the U.S. Army from 1967-69 forced him to forego a scholarship to ski for the University of Colorado Buffaloes. He was able to take leave from the Army for the World Cup with military orders that read: "Released for temporary duty to the U.S. Ski Team under the command of Bob Beattie."

Born to a Japanese father, one of his moments of greatest pride was competing in his father's ancestral homeland at the 1972 Olympics in Sapporo. As an Asian American, Kashiwa was an electrifying figure in the sport during a period of burgeoning popularity. And when he had a chance to join the new World Pro Ski Tour after the Olympics, he jumped at the opportunity.

Led by Hall of Famer Beattie, the new pro tour hopped across North America from resort to resort. It featured a head-to-head format using television and PR campaigns to build the athletes into sport stars. Kashiwa moved his home base to the popular cowboy-town-turned-ski-resort of Steamboat Springs. He soon became one of the biggest names on the tour, winning a dozen races and claiming the World Pro title in 1975.

As a mainstay on the World Pro Ski Tour, Kashiwa became a media star. His television appearances made him a sport hero, even earning a berth on ABC's popular Superstars show, which pitted athletes from myriad sports in a made-for-TV challenge. In 1979, he was recognized as the sport's most outstanding ambassador, earning the Spider Sabich Award – named in honor of his longtime teammate who was killed three years earlier.

Retiring from the pro tour in 1981, Kashiwa became the first American ski racer to transition to television. He forged a 15-year career as a skiing commentator for GGP Sports, CBS, and ESPN. He partnered with Olympic medalist Christin Cooper on *Skiing Magazine on TV*, which was syndicated nationally. At the same time, he served as director of skiing at Colorado's Keystone Resort and later at Beaver Creek Resort.

In 1989, he put his technical knowledge of the sport to the test, partnering with brother Bucky Kashiwa to form Volant, serving as its president and CEO. With its unique stainless steel cap, Volant reached the number two spot in U.S. sales and became the largest ski manufacturer building skis in America out of its Colorado factory.

After leaving Volant in the early 2000s, Kashiwa turned his attention to the newly created private ski and golf development, the Yellowstone Club, in Montana. As its first vice president of marketing, he helped create the exclusive club that now boasts a community of over 875 skiing families with 600 homes and now serves as an ambassador.

Kashiwa has been widely recognized as one of the sport's most familiar names for nearly 50 years. In 1994, he was inducted into the Colorado Ski & Snowboard Hall of Fame and the Colorado Sports Hall of Fame in 2007.