

1936 WINTER OLYMPICS

The IV Winter Olympics were held in the market town of Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany from Feb. 6 to Feb. 16, 1936, which marked the last year that both the Summer and Winter Games were held in the same country, as well as the first time a symbolic torch was lit. A record 668 athletes arrived from twenty-eight nations to compete in seventeen events in eight sports. Australia, Bulgaria, Greece, Liechtenstein, Spain, and Turkey made their debut.

Although alpine skiing made its first appearance as a combined event (downhill and slalom) in addition to the Nordic skiing events (which were comprised of cross-country, Nordic combined, and ski jumping), the International Olympic Committee ruled that ski instructors could not compete in the Games because they were professionals. Austrian and Swiss skiers boycotted the 1936 Winter Olympics, but some Austrians decided to compete under representation of Germany.

The U.S. finished eighth in the medal tally with four medals (one gold and three bronze). The U.S. two-man bobsled teams were awarded a gold and bronze medal. The men's ice hockey team won a bronze, as did Leo Freisinger in the men's 500-meter speed skating competition.

Competing in the new alpine skiing combined event was Richard (Dick) Durrance of the U.S. team, who came in tenth. He was a seventeen-time national championship skier, and one of the first American skiers to compete successfully with the Europeans. Dick, although born in Florida, moved to Garmisch, Germany where he learned to ski, and then returned to the U.S. during the rise of Hitler. Subsequent to competing in the 1936 Winter Olympics, he bought and operated the fledgling Alta resort in Utah, and then moved to Denver to design and test Groswood skis. After contracting with Denver's Ernest Constam, inventor of the J-bar and T-bar skis, Dick sold his first T-bar to Aspen. In 1947, he began managing the Aspen Skiing Company, helping to bring the 1950 World Championships there, and spent the rest of his life in Colorado.

A BRIEF HIATUS

Unfortunately, though the 1940 Winter Olympics were to be held in Sapporo, Japan, they were taken away in 1938 after Japan invaded China in the Sino-Japanese War. The 1940 Games were then awarded to St. Moritz, Switzerland, withdrawn due to controversies, and finally given again to Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany. However, just three months later, Germany invaded Poland and the Winter Games were cancelled altogether.

Similarly, the 1944 Winter Olympics were given to Cortina d'Ampezzo, Italy in 1939 but were cancelled again due to World War II.

1948 WINTER OLYMPICS: "GAMES OF RENEWAL"

After a twelve-year hiatus, the 1948 Games were held in St. Moritz, Switzerland, chosen for its neutrality. Overcoming a lack of financial and human resources, the Winter Games were held from Jan. 30 to Feb. 8 and attracted 28 nations and 670 athletes for 22 events in 4 sports. Chile, Denmark, Iceland, Korea, and Lebanon debuted at these Winter Olympics; Germany and Japan were not invited to compete. Although these Winter Games were some of the most competitive in history, they were also steeped in controversy: Norway skiers had to borrow skis from the American team to compete, the 1920 Antwerp Olympic flag was stolen, two rival U.S. ice hockey teams arrived to compete, and a truck driver accidentally backed into a shed housing the U.S. bobsleds, which had to be repaired.

The downhill and slalom events were added to alpine skiing, while the Nordic skiing events were comprised of the 18-, 50-, and 4x10-kilometer cross-country, ski jumping, and Nordic combined. France, Austria, and Switzerland triumphed in the men's alpine skiing results, while in the women's alpine skiing events, Switzerland, Austria, and the U.S. dominated. Norway, Sweden, and Finland swept all Nordic skiing events.

The U.S. placed fourth in the medal tally, with nine medals (three gold, four silver, and two bronze). Gretchen Fraser, the daughter of German and Norwegian immigrants and from Washington, won a gold medal in the slalom and silver in the alpine combined events for the U.S., making her the first American skier to ever win a gold medal for skiing. The four-man bobsled won a gold medal, as did Dick Button, who competed in the men's singles figure skating event, and became the first American to win a gold in figure skating by completing the first double axel during a competition. The silver medals were



awarded to John Heaton in the men's skeleton, as well as Ken Bartholomew and Robert Fitzgerald in the men's 500-meter speed skating, who tied. The two-man and four-man bobsled teams won both bronze medals.

Other athletes of notice during the 1948 Winter Olympics included Wendall "Chummy" Broomhall, who placed sixty-fifth in the 18-kilometer cross-country. He was born in Maine, served in the 10th Mountain Division during World War II, and designed the cross-country ski trails for the 1960 and 1980 Winter Olympics. Gordy Wren, who died in Steamboat Springs after serving as director of the area, placed fifth in the ski jumping event, and was also part of the 10th Mountain Division during World War II. As the first American to qualify in all Olympic skiing events, he is a member of the National Ski & Snowboard Hall of Fame as well as the Colorado Ski & Snowboard Hall of Fame.

1952 WINTER OLYMPICS

For the first time, the International Olympic Committee had to vote on a location, and Oslo, Norway won the 1952 Winter Olympics, beating Cortina d'Ampezzo, Italy and Lake Placid, New York. Thirty nations arrived, with a debut from New Zealand and Portugal, and the return of Australia, Germany, and Japan. Almost seven hundred athletes competed in twenty-two events. Although the combined alpine event was dropped, a 10-kilometer cross-country skiing event was open to women!

The U.S. went home with eleven medals (four gold, six silver, and one bronze), placing second in the tally. In the alpine skiing events, which included downhill, giant slalom, and slalom, Austria, Norway, and Italy swept the men's results while Germany, Austria, Italy, and the U.S. dominated the women's results. In the Nordic skiing events (men's 18-, 50-, 4x10-kilometer relay cross-country, women's 10-kilometer cross-country, ski jumping, and Nordic combined), Finland, Norway, and Sweden won all medals.

In the giant slalom and slalom, Andrea Mead Lawrence emerged victorious for the U.S., becoming the first woman to win two gold medals in these events. Dick Button and Ken Henry also were awarded gold medals for their performances in the men's singles figure skating and the 500-meter men's speed skating events, respectively. Silver medals were given to the two-man bobsled, the four-man bobsled, Tenley Albright in the ladies single's figure skating, and Karol and Peter Kennedy in the pair's figure skating. The U.S. hockey team also won a silver medal, as did Don McDermott in the men's 500-meter speed skating. James Grogan, who was coached at Broadmoor Arena in Colorado Springs, took home a bronze medal for the men's singles figure skating.

Andrea Mead Lawrence, the first American to win double gold medals in a single Olympics, was born in Vermont into an alpine skiing family. She made the national team at age fourteen, and became captain of the U.S. Women's Ski Team for the 1952 Winter Olympics at age nineteen.

Andrea moved to Aspen in the 1960's, where she became a member of the town's planning board. She is the founder of the Andrea Lawrence Institute for Mountains and Rivers, a non-profit organization dedicated to environmental conservation, and also a member of the National Ski Hall of Fame.

Andrea Mead Lawrence training for the slalom race



Be sure to visit the Colorado Ski & Snowboard Museum to find out more information about these and other past Winter Olympics in our Spirit of America's Champions exhibit!