

1964 WINTER OLYMPICS

Over 1 million spectators flocked to Innsbruck, Austria for the 1964 Winter Olympics, from Jan. 29 to Feb. 9. Innsbruck won the Olympic bid against Calgary, Canada and Lahti, Finland. India, Mongolia, and North Korea debuted at these Winter Olympics, which held 34 events in 6 sports.

Although over one thousand athletes from 36 nations participated in this Olympiad, it was marred by tragedy. Just before the Games, Australian alpine skier Ross Milne and British luge slider Kazimierz Kay-Skrzypeski died during training. Additionally, three years prior, the entire U.S. figure skating team and family members were killed in 1961 when the Sabena Flight 548 crashed in Brussels en route to the World Championships in Prague. The 1961 World Championships were subsequently cancelled, and afterwards the entire U.S. figure skating team went into a period of rebuilding.

Commercialism played a large role at Innsbruck, and would continue to pose a problem at future Winter Games. Thirty-four television networks were represented, and IBM underwrote the new computing system with a corporate sponsorship approaching 1 million dollars. The introduction of computer technology transformed Olympic competition. Results were available in a matter of seconds, instead of hours, and skiers were clocked to the hundredth of a second for the first time.

Due to an atypical lack of snow, the Austrian army carved twenty thousand bricks of ice from a mountain-top, carried them to the bobsled and luge runs, and also brought forty thousand cubic meters of snow to the alpine skiing courses. They packed all of this snow down by hand and foot.

The U.S. Olympic Team was in 8th place for the medal tally, with 6 medals (one gold, two silver, and three bronze). Terry McDermott won gold in the men's 500-meter speed skating, and a bronze was given to Scott Allen for his performance in the men's singles figure skating.

The 1964 Games brought a long-awaited breakthrough for the U.S. Men's Ski Team when almost 30 years of frustration came to a glorious end. In the slalom race, Billy Kidd won a silver medal, finishing fourteen hundredths of a second behind Pepi Stiegler, while Jimmie Heuga was able to secure a bronze medal. Billy also placed 7th in the giant slalom. Another American star was Jean Saubert of the women's team, who won two medals (bronze in the slalom and silver in the giant slalom).



**1 Slalom silver medalist
Billy Kidd, the director of
skiing at Steamboat ski
resort**

Jean Saubert running gates in the
slalom



A native of Stowe, VT, Billy Kidd was a top junior ski racer at an early age. He became the first U.S. man (along with Jimmie Huega) to earn an Olympic medal in alpine skiing in the 1964 Games, where he also placed 3rd in the combined (a non-medal event), 8th in the giant slalom, and 16th in the downhill. In 1966, he won multiple big races in Europe but also experienced the first of two major injuries that almost ended his career (an ankle sprain and later, a broken leg in Chile).

After winning the World Cup slalom following the 1964 Olympics, Billy was regarded as the best slalom skier in North America. He competed in the 1968 Olympics (finishing 5th in the giant slalom and 15th in downhill), 1968 World Cup, and the 1970 World Championships (where he won gold in the combined and bronze in the slalom), but then retired from the World Cup circuit, only to join the pro circuit started by former U.S. coach Bob Beattie. Billy won the pro championship later that year, becoming the only racer to hold world titles in two circuits at once. In 1972, he retired from pro racing and relocated to Steamboat Springs, where he still serves as the director of skiing at the resort.

Jimmie Heuga, who grew up in Squaw Valley, CA, also began competing when he was young, and even appeared in a Warren Miller film at age nine. After making the U.S. Ski Team at age fifteen, Jimmie continued to race for coach Bob Beattie in the 1960's at the University of Colorado. He was the 1963 NCAA Champion for the slalom event, and made the 1964 U.S. Olympic Team. In 1966, Jimmie went to Portillo, Chile for the World Championships, where he placed 6th in the slalom and 4th in the combined. He also competed in the 1968 Olympics (10th in the giant slalom and 7th in the slalom).

After the Olympics, Jimmie joined the pro racing team, but was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis in 1970, which derailed his ski racing career at age 27. He remained an advocate for multiple sclerosis, as the founder of Can Do Multiple Sclerosis (formerly the Heuga Center for Multiple Sclerosis). Jimmie spent the rest of his life in Colorado, and passed away in February 2010. Both Jimmie and Billy are members of the Colorado Ski & Snowboard Hall of Fame.



Olympic bronze medalist Jimmie Heuga founded the Vail Valley-based Heuga Center for Multiple Sclerosis, now known as Can Do MS. Photo credit: Margaret Durrance.

1968 WINTER OLYMPICS

Grenoble, France won the bid for the 1968 Winter Games, which were held on Feb. 6 – Feb. 18, and featured 35 events in 6 sports. However, only skating and hockey events were held in Grenoble itself; the rest of the events were located in 5 distant locations around the Dauphine region. Due to this, and the fact that there were 3 separate Olympic Villages for athletes from 37 competing nations, there was some controversy about the decentralization of these Games.

This Olympiad held many firsts for the Winter Games: East and West Germany entered as separate countries, the IOC began ordering drug and gender tests, and Grenoble adopted the first (unofficial) Olympic mascot – Schuss, a styled skier. These were also the first Games to use Bugler's Dream by Leo Arnauld as the theme for television coverage, which was broadcast in color for the first time.

Commercialism proved to be an even bigger issue at these Games, after skiers allowed images to be used in advertisements while receiving large under-the-table payments. Consequently, skis were taken from athletes immediately after competition to prevent displaying trademarks to the media.

Jean-Claude Killy of France swept all 3 alpine events (the only other athlete to do so was Toni Sailer in 1956), but only after one of the greatest disputes in the Winter Olympics. Killy's rival, Karl Schranz, from Austria, claimed that he had to skid to a halt during the slalom event after someone crossed the race path. Schranz beat Killy in the rematch, but the Jury of Appeal decided to disqualify him anyway, making Killy the winner of all 3 alpine ski events.

The U.S. came in 9th in the medal tally, with 7 medals (one gold, five silver, and one bronze). Peggy Fleming earned the gold in the ladies singles figure skate, and Tim Wood was awarded silver in the men's singles figure skate. However, the rest of the medals were won in speed skate events: Jenny Fish, Dianne Holum, and Mary Meyers all tied for silver in the women's 500-meter, while Terry McDermott won silver in the men's 500-meter event. The bronze was given to Dianne Holum in the women's 1,000-meter race.

COLORADO CONNECTION

Vladimir "Spider" Sabich was a member of the 1968 U.S. Olympic Ski Team. He was from Sacramento, CA, but learned to ski at the Edelweiss ski area near Lake Tahoe. After attending the University of Colorado, where he majored in nautical engineering and skied for head coach Bob Beattie (who also coached the U.S. Ski Team), Spider made the national team.

Spider finished 5th in the slalom and 14th in the giant slalom during the 1968 Games, and went on to ski on the World Cup circuit for several seasons. Skiing became widely popularized in the U.S. during the 1960's and '70's, thanks in part to Spider. He turned pro after the 1970 ski season, and won the pro championships in 1971 and '72. Endorsements allowed him to move from Boulder to Aspen, where he built a house in the Starwood area. Spider's last victory on the pro circuit tour was at Mt. Snow in VT in 1974 because unfortunately, Spider's untimely death came in March of 1976. Spider is a member of the Colorado Ski & Snowboard Hall of Fame.



Spider Sabich, Olympic athlete in the 1968 Winter Games.