

# Trailblazer

## Marty Hall '60 glides into Hall of Fame

Monday, May 14, 2018



Marty Hall '60, a guru in the world of cross-country skiing and always the mentor, practically jumps out of his chair in his eagerness to demonstrate and teach. While squirrels scurry about on the snow outside the window of his den/mini-museum at his home in Durham and Sweetie — a deaf terrier mix that Marty and his wife Kathy '66 rescued from the far northern reaches of Canada's Baffin Islands — looks on intently from her chair, Hall bends at the waist and gets into position.

“OK, I’m in a downhill tuck,” he says, and with that, the 2018 United States Ski & Snowboard Hall of Fame inductee is off and telling stories.

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Stories of learning how to ski with his hometown Gilford (N.H.) Outing Club. Stories about a meandering journey through UNH that started in 1956 and included lettering in three sports — skiing, football and track & field — before eventually culminating with a degree in physical education in 1971. Stories about how that UNH education helped him lead the United States, in the person of Vermonter Bill Koch, to its first (and, until 2018, only) Olympic medal in Nordic skiing in 1976 in Innsbruck, Austria.

“Marty put cross-country skiing on the map internationally,” says Cory Schwartz ’82, coordinator of UNH’s ski program and head Nordic coach. “He dealt with trying to build a team before that team aspect was even there. It was a very individual sport. Marty was not only the coach, but he was the driving force.”

Hall, who enters the Hall of Fame in the “Snowsports Builder” category, “pushed the sport beyond the traditional confines,” says former United States Ski Team racer Peter Davis. “His ideas often led to controversy and criticism. But that never prevented him from promoting ideas that he believed in.”

“He has a passion for the sport. That’s probably a cliché, but ... he had that passion to the core and he still has it today.”

As the first full-time head cross-country coach hired by the U.S. Ski Team, one of Hall’s first moves was to implement a sports medicine program to educate athletes about biomechanics, psychology and exercise physiology. His ideas came from the break he took from college to join the Army, where he trained with its Modern Winter Biathlon Unit in Alaska — and from the UNH physical education program he returned to, which had been dramatically revamped during his leave of absence.

“The whole coaches’ education program got flopped,” Hall says. “From being baby stuff to biomechanics, kinesiology. By my prolonging my education tenure here, I got to take advantage of all those courses and course changes. This school gave Marty Hall the tools to be successful as a modern-day ski coach.”

Successful he was, and not just in coaching Olympic silver-medalist Koch. Hall coached cross-country skiing for five Olympic Teams — the U. S. teams in 1972 and 1976 and Canada’s teams in 1984, 1988 and 1992. After Canada, Hall worked as a Nordic ski consultant, organized and ran clinics for officials and organizers of events, designed and constructed cross-country trail systems and served on numerous national and international technical committees, along with other projects.

“He has a passion for the sport,” says longtime friend Tom Kelly, chairman of the Hall of Fame board of directors. “That’s probably a cliché, but ... he had that passion to the core and he still has it today.”

Six years ago, Marty and Kathy, who celebrated their 50th anniversary in 2017, brought that passion back to Durham. They’re regulars at Wildcat athletic events of all kinds and are ardent supporters of the ski program. Last year, they became the lead donors for the UNH SkiPlex project, which will bring a major and much-needed renovation and upgrade to ski team locker and team rooms.

And speaking of Kathy, Hall offers one last story. Several years ago, Hall recalls, his wife came home from a book club gathering with an exercise and a challenge to him: He had 20 seconds and five words to write his epitaph.

“I did it my way,” Marty answered, with plenty of seconds to spare.

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