

HISTORY OF KENNETT SKIING



Kennett High School Ski Team 1949

At this time, we know that the sport of skiing arrived in the Mt. Washington Valley with the establishment of the Eastern Slope Club in the mid-1930s. While we assume that skiing may have been a club sport for Kennett High School before 1949, the photo above represents the first documented image of a Kennett Ski Team that we have come across.

The Kennett Ski Team of 1949 enjoyed a successful season. In the first competition of the year, the state meet held at Mt. Sunapee, although Kennett did not secure an overall victory, Jim Layne and Wally Ashnault claimed individual honors in downhill and slalom. The Ski Team then went on to triumph over Holderness and achieved a tie with Laconia.

1949 Kennett Ski Team was:

Kneeling (L-R): Richard Church (captain), Imogene Opton, and Fred Peters.

Standing (L-R): Craig Arnold, William Pratt, James Layne, Henry Allen and Wallace Ashnault.

Kennett Skiing holds an impressive record, surpassing all other Kennett sports with a total of 67 State Championships. Additionally, eight athletes have earned a place on the U.S Ski Teams, and seven athletes have represented the U.S in Olympic Alpine, Cross Country, or Biathlon Teams. According to the NHIAA Website, the Kennett Alpine Ski Team (boys & girls) ranked in Division I from 1963 to 2002, subsequently moving to Division II from 2003 to the present. Meanwhile, the Kennett Cross Country Ski Team (boys & girls) has consistently held a Division II ranking since 2003, marking the earliest recorded date for Cross Country.

ALPINE SKIING ATHLETES TO REMEMBER

The Eastern Slope Ski Club was established in December 1935, offering junior ski instruction on Saturdays. Within a few months, weekly slalom races for junior skiers were added. By 1938, the Eastern Slope Ski Club's Junior Ski Program expanded, providing boys and girls in Conway, North Conway, Jackson, and Bartlett with awarded equipment and weekly ski instruction. The impact of the Eastern Slope Ski Club and its Junior Ski Program has been profound, with many athletes dominating the slopes and etching their names onto leaderboards as Athletes to Remember.

Imogene Opton Fish



Imogene was born in Germany but moved to Conway with her family at a young age. She graduated from Kennett in 1949, where she stood out as the only girl on the alpine ski team. Following graduation, she spent a year at UNH before relocating to Sun Valley, Idaho, to participate in a program for emerging skiers. Competing in various races, including four Olympic tryouts, she performed exceptionally well and earned a spot on the Olympic team. In the 1952 Olympics, she achieved 15th place in Giant Slalom and an impressive 5th place in Slalom. Imogene's remarkable achievements also led to her induction into the Kennett High School Sports Hall of Fame.

Leona Reny Hill

Leona, a 1954 graduate of Kennett High School, stood out as a remarkable athlete. During her time at Kennett, she was a member of the ski team and became one of the first to dominate the slopes in the school's history. After leaving KHS, Leona earned a reputation as one of New Hampshire's finest skiers. Her achievements included an enviable record as a competitor for the U.S. Women's Ski Team in 1953, the Junior National Ski Team in 1954, and the U.S. Women's Ski Team again in 1956. While she attended the U.S. Olympic Trials in 1950 and 1954, she narrowly missed making the Olympic Team. In recognition of her outstanding contributions, Leona was inducted into the Kennett High Sports Hall of Fame in 1991. Her incredible talent on skis also garnered national attention, leading to a feature in a 1955 issue of Sports Illustrated



ALPINE SKIING ATHLETES TO REMEMBER

Reuban “Tyler” Palmer

Tyler graduated from Kennett in 1969. Although he wasn't a Kennett Ski Team athlete due to attending a private school in the winter months, he remained an integral part of Kennett's Ski History community. Tyler ventured into the World Cup circuit from 1969-1972 and achieved a significant milestone in 1971 by winning a slalom World Cup race at St. Moritz, marking the first-ever World Cup victory for an American male. In the 1970-71 season, Palmer secured a third-place finish in the slalom World Cup. Throughout his career, he notched two World Cup victories, four podium finishes, and nine top 10s, with all but one in slalom. Notably, he clinched second place in the 1971 Arlberg Kandahar slalom. Tyler also competed in the 1972 Olympics, earning a respectable 9th place in Slalom. Later, he participated in the World Professional Ski Tour, winning five races and claiming the Spider Sabich Trophy in 1978.



David Currier



David graduated from Kennett in 1970. He pursued skiing for Dartmouth and the Eastern Slope Ski Club. Although his career with the US National Team was brief, spanning only the 1971-72 season, David made a mark by securing one top 10 downhill finish in World Cup races that year. He ended the 1971-72 season with an overall World Cup placement of 52nd. In the 1972 Olympics, David competed, achieving a 17th place finish in downhill, but unfortunately, did not finish in Giant Slalom.

ALPINE SKIING ATHLETES TO REMEMBER

Abbi Fisher



Abbi graduated from Kennett in 1975, having played a pivotal role in leading Kennett to their State Championships in 1972 and 1974. After graduating, she joined the US Ski Team, participating in World Cup races from 1974 to 1982. Abbi achieved a significant milestone by winning one World Cup race, a slalom in 1978. In total, she earned three podium finishes and secured 32 top 10s in the World Cup. Her best overall World Cup season was 1977-78, ranking 15th overall. Fisher also competed at the 1978 World Championships, as well as the 1976 and 1980 Olympics. Unfortunately, she did not finish any of her Olympic races.

Leanne Smith

Leanne, a 2005 graduate from Kennett High School, left an indelible mark on the slopes, bringing the State Championship home to the Eagles in 2003, 2004, and 2005. Following her graduation from Kennett, she enrolled at UNH but took leave after her first year to join the U.S. Ski Team on the development team. Leanne erupted onto the scene with a breakout season as a double NorAm champion, propelling her to the World Cup level.



A NorAm champion and top-flight junior skier, she secured a spot on the World Cup elite after finishing 23rd in her career's first World Cup start, which coincidentally was the first downhill of the 2008 season. Within five years, she stood on the World Cup podium in Val d'Isere. Leanne also competed in the Olympics in 2010 and 2014. In 2010, she placed 18th in Super G and did not finish in Super Combined. In 2014, she achieved 21st place in Super Combined and 19th in Super G.

X-COUNTRY AND BIATHLON ATHLETES TO REMEMBER

Carl Swenson



Carl, a 1988 graduate of Kennett, achieved his best international result with a 5th place finish in the 2003 World Championship 50k skate in Val di Fiemme, Italy. Notably, he anchored the US relay team to a historic 5th place at the Salt Lake City Games in 2002. Carl's accomplishments extend to winning 11 US National Nordic Ski Championships and consistently performing well in top international races. He also dominated the US marathon series circuit for several years.

As a three-time Olympian in Cross Country Skiing (1994, 2002, and 2006), Carl's results varied. In 1994, he placed 45th in the 30km Freestyle. In 2002, he achieved 56th place in the 30km Freestyle, 5th in the 4 x 10km Relay, and 29th in the Sprint Freestyle. In 2006, he secured 39th place in the 30km Skiathlon, 12th in the 4 x 10km Relay, and did not finish the 50km Mass Start, Freestyle.

Sean Doherty

Sean, a 2013 graduate of Kennett, made a significant mark in biathlon. In 2016, he became the all-time leader in individual medals at the IBU Youth/Junior World Championships, winning three medals and bringing his career total to 10. Notably, he was the youngest member of the 2014 U.S. Olympic Biathlon Team at the age of 18.

Sean had a breakout season in 2013, winning a gold and two silver medals in the IBU Junior World Championships, becoming the first U.S. biathlon athlete to triple podium at any World Championship event. He repeated this feat at the 2014 Youth World Championships (2 gold, 1 silver) and the 2016 Junior World Championships (1 gold, 1 silver, 1 bronze). Additionally, Sean was a member of the 2012 U.S. Youth Olympic Games squad in Innsbruck, Austria, where he won a bronze as a part of the mixed relay team.

In the 2022 Olympics, Sean competed in Biathlon, securing 47th place in the Men's 10km Sprint, 43rd in the Men's 12.5km Pursuit, 42nd in the Men's 10km Individual, 13th in the Men's 4 x 7.5km Relay, and an impressive 7th in the Mixed relay 4 x 6km.



STATE CHAMPIONSHIPS

The value of Eastern Slopes Ski Club's Junior Ski Program is evident in the remarkable achievements Kennett High School Ski Teams has accumulated over the years. The boys' alpine team has clinched 27 State Championships, while the girls' team boasts 17 State Championships. Both the Boys and Girls Nordic teams have earned 9 State Championships each, and the Ski Jumping Team has secured 5 State Championships. Kennett's dominance in skiing during the early 2000s prompted the New Hampshire Interscholastic Athletic Association (NHIAA) to implement rule changes. In 2003, NHIAA introduced an overall team title, combining boys and girls results from alpine, cross-country, and jumping. Kennett continued its dominance, winning the titles in 2003, 2004, 2005, and 2006 by such a wide margin that the concept of an overall champion became less significant.

Boys Alpine State Championships

1979, 1980, 1981, 1982, 1984, 1990, 1993, 1994, 1995, 1997, 1998, 2000, 2001, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2018, 2019



1978 Boys Alpine Runner Ups

Girls Alpine State Championships

1970, 1971, 1972, 1974, 1994, 1995, 1996, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2018, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023



2005 Girls Alpine State Champions



2003 Boys Alpine State Champions



2023 Girls Alpine State Champions

STATE CHAMPIONSHIPS

Boys Nordic State Championships

2005, 2007, 2012, 2013,
2014, 2015, 2016, 2017,
2018

Girls Nordic State Championships

2004, 2005, 2006, 2015,
2016, 2017, 2018, 2019,
2020



2017 Boys & Girls Nordic State Champions

Ski Jumping State Championships

2009, 2010, 2017,
2018, 2021



2021 Ski Jumping State Champions

SKIMEISTER TITLES

Kennett athletes have also achieved numerous Skimeister Titles. The Skimeister is awarded to the top skier who participates in cross-country, slalom, and giant slalom for the girls, and includes ski jumping for the boys in New Hampshire. Kennett has produced an impressive total of 11 girls and 19 boys who have earned this prestigious title.

Boys Skimeister Award

1954 Frank Bogle
1959 Damon O'Neil
1965 Kellog Boynton
1968 David Currier
1971 Judson Howe
1975 Perry Bryant
1984 Jason Thome
1987 Ron Goodwin
1988 Ron Goodwin
1989 Jim Watt
1990 Jim Watt
1992 Karl Chandler
1995 Dan Spofford
1996 Isak Goodwin
1997 Peter Broomhall
2001 Kris Kebler
2004 Tyler Haynes
2005 Tyler Haynes
2006 Peter Ostroski
2007 Peter Ostroski
2011 Duncan Cromwell
2012 Torin Laliberter
2017 Dennis Morgan

Girls Skimeister Award

1985 Jen Murphy
2000 Kristen Kebler
2002 Nicole Veilleux
2003 Alex Norden
2004 Alex Norden
2005 Alex Norden
2006 Amanda tulip
2007 Danielle Shannon
200 Hannah Lucy
2009 Cassidy Van
Deursen
2011 Amber McPherson
2017 Jordanna Bell-Isle
2021 Carli Krebs

SKI JUMPING INDIVIDUAL STATE CHAMPION

Although not officially recognized as a New Hampshire Interscholastic Sport, Kennett has seen a few students win the Individual Ski Jumping State Championship.

Boys Individual Ski Jumping Champion

2018 Sean Moloney



2019 Zach Grzesik

Girls Individual Ski Jumping Champion

2021 Elizabeth Koroski

