

UNITED STATES BIATHLON TEAM

KARI SWENSON

HALL OF FAME CLASS OF 2015

Kari Swenson grew up in the outdoor environment of Bozeman, Montana where a family friend introduced her to Nordic skiing. Representing the USSA Northern Division at the Junior Nationals from 1976 to 1979 she learned of biathlon through the men's U.S. Biathlon team when they organized a biathlon race for the Junior Nationals.



As a student of pre-veterinary medicine and a member of the Montana State University nordic ski team she was recommended and named to the U.S. Biathlon Association's first women's team in 1980. While combining difficult studies with a strenuous skiing career Kari improved her biathlon skills to earn her National Championship titles in 1984 and 1985 as well as three runner-up finishes in the period of 1984 to 1986. A strong advocate for women participating in both national and international biathlon competitions, Kari was named to the first U.S. Team to participate in the first World Biathlon Championships for women at Chamonix, France in 1984. It was at those first championships that Kari secured her place in biathlon history.

At the first World Biathlon Championships for women, Kari's 5th place finish behind four competitors from the Soviet Union set a standard that would not be equaled until 2012. Missing only 1 target she set the stage for an even brighter highlight of U.S. Biathlon international results. After finishing 13th in the sprint race, on a terribly windy and difficult day for shooting she and her teammates combined to capture the first ever U.S. World Championships medal by finishing 3rd in the relay race behind the Soviet Union and Norway, just edging out Finland at the finish. Racing on the second leg, Kari hit all her targets in one of the most difficult shooting days ever experienced in an international biathlon competition.

Kari went on to race in two additional World Biathlon Championships in 1985 at Egg, Switzerland and in 1986 at Falun, Sweden. She continued to have excellent results with a 5th place finish in the prestigious Oslo World Cup.

Retiring in 1986 to pursue her degree in Veterinary Medicine at Colorado State University in Fort Collins, Kari now practices veterinarian medicine in her home town of Bozeman, Montana and remains active in biathlon where she helped establish Bridger Biathlon Club and mentors young athletes. For being one of biathlon's women pioneers and winning a World Biathlon Championship Bronze medal, Kari is welcomed to the Hall of Fame.