



2022 JULIUS BLEGEN AWARD NOMINEES

Chuck Heckert

Tom Johnston

Richard Rokos

Nominee: Chuck Heckert

Nominated by: Joe Lamb (Past Blegen Recipient)

Support: Martina Lussi, chair, Ski Jumping & Nordic Combined Committee

Chuck Heckert was the penultimate U.S. Ski & Snowboard volunteer, with a long and distinguished career of service to athletes whose spirit will be a lasting inspiration. An athlete, coach, international official and, most of all, a friend to all, his work in ski jumping over decades has left a positive imprint on the sport.

A native of Grand Lake, Colo., Heckert began coaching ski jumping in 1976 at Winter Park. He supported his passion with a variety of local jobs with his primary motivation to help young ski jumpers. In the lead-up to the 2002 Olympics, he moved to Utah to oversee the ski jumping and freestyle venues at the Utah Olympic Park serving as a venue manager at the Games.

Heckert began his career as a ski jumping judge in the 1980s, becoming a FIS international judge in 1993. He played a pivotal role internationally in the sport judging competitions around the world in the lead up to the 2002 Olympics. During that time, he was a key member of the team that developed and managed the ski jumping complex in Park City.

Despite an ongoing battle with cancer, Heckert remained at the forefront of the sport for nearly two decades after the Olympics. Ski jumpers and fellow officials were always gratified to see him at events. He was the sport's biggest silent fan, always there to support. In 2017 he received the Mittelstadt Award for ski jumping officials and was also inducted into the American Ski Jumping Hall of Fame.

A humble and unassuming man, he was a real spirit behind the sport of ski jumping in America for decades until his passing in November, 2020. Chuck Heckert exemplifies the character and spirit of the Julius Blegen Award and would be a rightful recipient.

Nominee: Tom Johnston

Nominated by: Ted Sutton (Past Blegen Recipient)

Tom Johnston's impact on the US ski racing world reaches from the local club to the World Cup and Olympic levels. After serving as the Alpine Head Coach for Whitman College, Tom came to the Jackson Hole Ski Club in 1986, where he was an alpine coach, director of the race crew, and head of alpine events until 1998. During that time, his work ethic, grounded in hard work and straightforward communication, was an example to everyone. With his athletes, he ingrained the importance of mastering basic technical skills through repeated drills and exercises while also instructing them in progressive skiing techniques. In 1998, when Tom was the Chief of Race for the Alpine National Championships at Jackson Hole, USSA took notice of his race course style and organizational skills. His career launched that year as a technical adviser for USSA. Tom has raised the bar for race course preparation and safety standards, which he has carried to a multitude of NorAm Cup, National Championship, World Cup, and Olympic venues throughout this country and the world.

Since 1998, Tom has served as Technical Advisor/Referee for most Nor-Am and US National Alpine Championship events, and Technical Advisor for all US World Cups. He has been involved in the Olympics in various capacities, including Chief of Course for Olympic speed events in 2002, the Alpine Specialist in 2014, and the Alpine Foreign Advisor in 2018 and 2022. He was Technical Advisor for the 1999 and 2015 World Championships in Vail/Beaver Creek, and Snow Specialist for Are 2019. Tom is known for developing innovative techniques in race course preparation and safety. He is one of the world's foremost experts on shaping and preparing race courses, most notably downhill and super-G tracks.

He trains and mentors many event professionals in his methodologies. His driving work ethic and a "no-nonsense" management style serves him well. His wife stated, "There's no 'recreation' in his vocabulary, he just works." One of his proudest achievements was the design and build of the Copper Speed Center which provides countless athletes speed and technical event training and competition in a highest level venue. He has received the West Family and Bud and Mary Little awards. As one of the foremost experts in the world on race hill preparation and venue safety, Tom's legacy can be felt in the robust race culture that continues to grow and develop in US skiing.

Nominee: Richard Rokos

Nominated by: Walt Evans (Awards Working Group Board Member)

As I prepare this nomination form for Richard Rokos he is leading the University of Colorado NCAA Team to the NCAA Championships in Franconia, New Hampshire. This will be Richard's final event as the Director of Skiing for the University of Colorado. A well-earned retirement for a great coach and leader.

Leadership: Richard embodies the qualities and spirit of what the Blegen Award represents in our US Ski and Snowboard family. He is an inspirational leader who has nurtured the evolution of alpine and cross country skiing for over 3 decades. He is engaged at the FIS level as a long standing member of the FIS University Sub-committee, he continues to serve on many US Ski and Snowboard Working Groups including: the collegiate committee, the alpine development committee, the rocky-central alpine committee.

Athletic Performance: Rokos, 71, is the 11th and longest tenured head coach in CU ski history; has guided Colorado to eight NCAA titles, claiming the crowns in 1991, 1995, 1998, 1999, 2006, 2011, 2013 and 2015. In addition, his Buffaloes have won individual titles (43 total) in 19 different years. That first team title came in his first season as head coach, a unique accomplishment in any sport.

His skiers, Alpine and Nordic, have posted 345 top 10 finishes at the NCAA Championships; that total includes 146 first-team All-Americans, with 42 earning two-time single-year All-American mention, and 93 second-team All-Americans. Academically, the skiers have boasted grade point averages that are always at or near the top of all of CU's 17 varsity sports programs, often in excess of 3.5. His teams have placed 311 student-athletes on the NCAA Skiing All-Academic Team, the equivalent of Academic All-American.

Legacy: Richard's influence on his athletes goes way beyond athletic development. He lives the core values while inspiring his athletes and coaches to do the same. His alumni athletes are in leadership positions all through the ski industry, these alumni will continue Richard's legacy and values into the future. Richard is a role model that the US Ski and Snowboard Association emulates in all of our athletes, coaches, officials and volunteers. His legacy remains in the multitude of alumni from Richard's tenure who now occupy leadership roles in the ski industry.

Summary: Please take a moment to review this important summary of Richard's contributions to skiing: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NCmAQEJp5XE>