



Gault Gillespie

Inducted CSHF: 1987

Hometown: Outremont, QC / Laurentians, QC

Date of Birth: March 21, 1915

Date of Death: Deceased

Affiliated Discipline(s): Alpine: Cross-Country, Downhill, Slalom. Coach, Official

Active Career Date(s): 1931 - 1948

FIS Code: n/a

Club: Esterel Sports Club, Two Mountains Ski Club

Gault Kerr Gillespie was born on March 21, 1915 at Outremont, Quebec. After the family moved to the Laurentians in the early 1920s, Gault and his sisters and brothers would ski to school in order to shorten the trip. Today, this two-mile short cut is the beginning of the well known Gillespie Trail.

His competitive career began in 1931 when he took part in a few local cross-country races. In 1932, he won the Ste Agathe ski trophy. His entry into racing at the provincial level came in January 1934 when he entered his first Laurentian Zone 18-kilometre race. To get to the race and return home, Gillespie skied almost 40 kilometers. Only on the following day did he learn that he had beaten four former Olympic competitors to win the race. It was Canada's most famous skier, Herman Smith Johannsen who brought the trophy to Gillespie.

Among his many achievements between 1934 and 1938, he won the Laurentian Ski Zone Championship three times, the Mount Royal cross-country race, and came 2nd in the 50 km race. He also competed in slalom and downhill usually placing in the first fifteen competitors over the line.

It was in the winter of 1939 when, at Fort William, Ontario, he came into national prominence by winning the Dominion (Canadian) 18-kilometre Championship by three seconds. He placed 9th in downhill and 11th in slalom at the same event. That same year, he also won the Quebec Provincial and Vallee St-Maurice Championships 18-kilometre races and the Laurentian Ski Zone 18-kilometre and 50-kilometre races.

He repeated his national championship victory in 1940 at Banff, Alberta, and placed 9th in downhill and 11th in slalom. He also took the Gold Medal at the Eastern Canadian Championship, the Quebec Provincial Championship, the Mont Royal Trophy and the Laurentian Zone Championship.

Originally a cross-country skier, Gillespie also took an increasing interest in Alpine events and eventually achieved the skills to become a Class "A" competitor in both downhill and slalom. He won the Gold Medal in slalom at Lac Beauport, Quebec, in 1941 and a Bronze Level in downhill at Ste-Marguerite, Quebec. He also finished among the first five competitors at the Quebec Kandahar.

Although he had qualified in 1939 to represent Canada at the winter Olympic Games in 1940, he was greatly disappointed when World War II was declared and the Games were cancelled. In the winter of that year, he continued his winning ways when, among his racing exploits, he won 5-Gold Medals. In that same year he became a member of the Canadian Ski Instructors' Alliance (CSIA).

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Deafness prevented him from joining the Canadian forces but he contributed to the war effort in his own way with a 3-year stint working in munitions factories. In the next few years, weekends were spent giving ski lessons, coaching young competitors while competing in the open class events.

In 1947, he built a ski tow in Val David, opened some trails and promoted Laurentian Ski Zone races. The challenges of operating a ski hill while coaching and competing kept him very busy. In 1948 he attended the Canadian Championships in Banff, Alberta as coach for Caroline Kruger who, unfortunately, broke her leg. He was encouraged to compete but refused as he had not competed in a cross-country race for a number of years. Eventually, he was persuaded, suitable equipment was found, and he proved that he could still compete at the national level by placing 3rd in the 18-kilometre event.

In 1963, he became a founding member of the Two Mountains Ski Club in Quebec where he later became president and instrumental in establishing a Nancy Greene school and racing team. His two sons and daughter became Class "A" competitors at the regional level.

In 1975/76, Gillespie was officially recognized by the Laurentian Ski Zone for his outstanding services to skiing. He was appointed a National Alpine Official in 1977, officiated at alpine ski races at both national and international levels including Can-Am, Sealtest, Pontiac and Kandahar. He officiated at Lake Placid, New York, for the U.S.A National Championships, the World Cup in 1979, and the Olympic Games at Lake Placid, New York, in 1980. In 1984, he was inducted into the Laurentian Ski Hall of Fame for his achievements and contributions to the world of skiing.