

## Lucile Wheeler (-Vaughan) O.C.

Inducted CSHF: 1982  
Hometown: N/A  
Date of Birth: January 14, 1935  
Date of Death:  
Affiliated Discipline(s): Alpine  
Active Career Date(s): 1947-1958  
FIS Code: 11024  
Club: N/A

Born in Ste Jovite, Quebec, on January 14, 1935, Lucile Wheeler was the first Canadian to win a Downhill medal at the Olympic Winter Games, the well-deserved culmination of a remarkable competitive career that began when she entered her first major competition at the age of 10. She placed seventh in a field of 21, none of whom were junior skiers.

She was made an Officer of the Order of Canada in 1976, one honor among many including the first Lou Marsh trophy for "outstanding athlete of the year in 1958 and the Velma Springstead Memorial Trophy as "outstanding female athlete" in the same year. She was the first Canadian to receive the prestigious Perry Medal awarded by the Ski Club of Great Britain, was inducted into the United States Ski Hall of Fame, the Quebec Hall of Fame, and in 2005, the Laurentian Hall of Fame. In 1999, she was awarded to Order of Ontario.

She was on skis at the age of 2 running messages three quarters of a mile from her home to Gray Rocks, the internationally famous inn owned by her family. Until that time, she had skied with the other children in her neighborhood, but unlike them, she was being coached by the late Herman Gardner, Director of the Gray Rocks Ski School, a man who profoundly influenced the course of uniform instruction and coaching techniques in Canada.

That same year, 1945, she entered her first Taschereau event at Mont Tremblant placing second among the junior racers, a placing made more significant by finishing the event on a broken ski. Two years later, in 1947, she was promoted to national class "B" with convincing wins in the downhill, slalom and combined events for ladies at Ste Agathe, Quebec. She became Canadian Junior Downhill and Combined champion at Mont Ste Anne, Quebec and was named to the Canadian Ladies Team for an international meet held at Lake Placid, New York. She was 12 years old.

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Following Herman Gardner's tragic death in an avalanche in 1947, John Fripp continued to coach her to continuing success the following season, a third in the Senior division in Slalom at St Donat, Quebec, a tie for first place at Val David, Quebec, and a win in both senior and Junior Divisions at the Taschereau event. The same year, she won the Junior division Downhill, Slalom and Combined events at the Dominion (national) Championships, Banff, Alberta, came second in the Senior division and raced again with the national team at Lake Placid, New York.

In 1949, the legendary Ernie McCulloch became her coach. Her successes continued; first place in Slalom, ladies Senior division, Ste Agathe; first place in both Junior and ladies Senior divisions at the Taschereau event; first place in Downhill, second in Combined at the Dominion Championships, second place to Mme Schmidt-Couttet of France in the Quebec Kandahar. After competing at the international meet at lake Placid, New York, she went to Sun Valley, Idaho, and Aspen, Colorado, for more experience.

In 1950, she again placed first in both Junior and ladies Senior Divisions at the Taschereau and was named to the Canadian FIS (Federation Internationale de Ski) team for the World Championships at Aspen Colorado.

She was the youngest member ever appointed to an FIS team.

In 1951, now 16 years of age, she placed second in the Junior and Senior ladies divisions at the Taschereau; a first place in Downhill and 3rd in Combined at the Quebec Kandahar. That same year, she participated in trials to select members for the Canadian Olympic Team and was invited to compete at the VI Olympic Winter Games held at Oslo, Norway in 1952. While in Europe, she competed in a number of competitions placing 2nd in a Giant Slalom at an international event at Zurs, Austria.

In 1953, she remained in North America competing in the Quebec Kandahar, Harriman Cup, the US Nationals and North American Championships, placing 1st in Downhill and Combined at the Canadian Championships.

In 1954, she went to Sweden as a member of the Canadian FIS team, finishing 7th in the Downhill, and spent the balance of the winter in Europe with notable finishes at Holmenkollen, 5th in Slalom, and the Arlberg Kandahar, 5th in Combined.

In 1955, she won the Combined event at the Canadian National Championships, finished 3rd in the Combined at the North American Championships and competed in the Harriman Cup.

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In 1956, she was 3rd in an international ski meet at Zermatt, Switzerland, and 2nd in Downhill and Combined at an event in Kitzbühel, Austria. It was also the year when she won a Bronze Medal in the Downhill event at the VII Olympic Winter Games held in Cortina d'Ampezzo, Italy.

In 1957, she was recognized by the Federation Internationale de Ski (FIS) as one of the three top women alpine skiers in the world. She placed 1st in both Downhill and Combined at Kitzbuhel, Austria.

In 1958 at the World Championships held at Bad Gastein, Austria, she placed 1st in the Downhill and Slalom events, and placed 2nd in Combined. At an International Ski Week meet, she placed 2nd in Giant Slalom and 5th in Slalom. At Grindelwald, Switzerland, she placed 4th in both Downhill and Combined.

Perhaps the greatest compliment paid to Lucile Wheeler were the comments made by an unknown writer while she was still an active competitor who said, "Lucile is much admired by her rivals in Europe and is thoroughly respected by ski officials everywhere for her fine sportsmanship. She never complains, often praises and is most loyal to her coaches. Despite her achievements, she remains modest and unassuming. She is an ambassador of whom all Canada is proud - in Canadian sports history she is a living legend".