

# Todd Brooker



World Cup downhill racer Todd Brooker experienced spectacular highs and devastating falls during his ten years of competitive skiing. Looking back on his career, Brooker once said he wouldn't change a thing.

“I don't really regret that I took a lot of falls, because that's the way I like to remember the downhill, as risky and challenging”, he said.

Brooker competed on the National Ski Team shortly after a small group of skiers, dubbed the “Crazy Canucks”, was dazzling the world with speed and daring. “I learned to enjoy skiing the way they enjoyed skiing,” said Brooker.

Brooker grew up in Waterloo and attended Lincoln Heights public school and Bluevale Collegiate. He spent many hours on the hills near Collingwood, Ontario, however, a mythic place in his skiing career will always be Kitzbuhel, Austria.

When Brooker was a preschooler, his parents Charlie and Joyce Brooker, moved to Kitzbuhel when his father, a player with the silver-medal Canadian hockey team in 1956 Olympics, took a coaching job there.

The young Brooker learned to ski in Kitzbuhel and many years later in 1983 he would win his first World Cup downhill there. That year he would go on to win the World Cup downhill event in Aspen, Colorado and receive the Canadian Alpine Skier of the Year Award.

The International Ski Federation ranked him number one in 1983 and 1984. Brooker competed on the 1984 Olympic team and in 1985 won the World Cup downhill event again in Japan.

His competitive career was slowed by many injuries and Brooker underwent 22 operations in an attempt to keep him on the hills. A fall that would prematurely end his competitive career happened at Kitzbuhel, the place where he had learned to ski and won his first World Cup.

The fall happened in 1987 and Brooker tore all four ligaments in an already injured knee and suffered a serious concussion. He also damaged his retina and couldn't see for three months. The Kitzbuhel fall was talked about for years and replayed over and over on television.

Reflecting on the fall that forced him into early retirement, Brooker said, “I could have overcome the other injuries, but I knew I had come to the end with my knee. They couldn't make it tight again and I just didn't have enough confidence that I could rely on it”.

The year he retired, Brooker received the Johnny F. Bassett Memorial Award, an award given to a Canadian athlete who exemplifies strong character and acts as an ambassador in sport.

Brooker, who now lives in Thornbury, Ontario with his wife Lisa and three daughters, operates a restaurant and can still be seen providing television commentary at ski competitions. Most recently he could be seen on NBC as the alpine ski analyst for the 2006 Torino Winter Olympics.

Brooker has also helped raise awareness for The Arthritis Society and works to encourage young skiers. “At the start of my career, I was inspired by the best ski racers in the World Cup. Regardless of their technique, I learned that their desire and passion for skiing were the most important factors.”

*Photo credit: Courtesy of Todd Brooker*