



GEORGE BROOKS

written by Ken Sickenger

Growing up in Taos, New Mexico, George Brooks spent as much time as he could flying down the slopes at Taos Ski Valley. It proved to be time well spent.

George went on to excel as a racer and a coach in the sport and ultimately led the University of New Mexico to its first-ever NCAA Division I team championship. His Lobos won it all in 2004 and George was named NCAA National Skiing Coach of the Year.

Arguably even more impressive was the fact that Brooks founded the UNM ski team and became its first head coach at age 20 – a position he would hold for 37 years.

"My dad used to say I invented my own job," Brooks said. "I think he was right, and for all those years I never once failed to look forward to going to work."

Skiing was certainly a labor of love for George, who competed in Taos Ski Valley's Junior Race Program while attending Taos High School. He was a two-time member of New Mexico's state junior team as a junior and senior.

George went on to compete collegiately, although UNM had only a club ski program at the time. He was a four-time CIAL All-Conference alpine skier and in 1970 earned a spot competing in the North American Alpine Championships.

It was also in 1970 that George approached UNM about making skiing an intercollegiate sport. School officials gave him the go-ahead and the program steadily rose to achieve consistent success.

From 1971 to 2006, George oversaw UNM's men's and women's programs in both alpine and Nordic skiing. In addition to their national title, George's Lobo teams finished as runners-up in 1992

and 2005, earned four third-place finishes and finished among the top 10 NCAA finishers 23 times.

On an individual level, George's UNM teams produced 125 All-Americans and more than 100 Academic All-Americans. His teams recorded the highest combined grade-point averages in the school's athletic program for 17 consecutive years. During his tenure coaching the Lobos, George was named head coach of the United States Ski Team at the World University Games 10 times.

George remains committed to promoting skiing nationally and within New Mexico and has served on numerous committees to help advance the sport over the years. From 2006 to 2023, he served as Executive Director of Ski New Mexico, an organization dedicated to promoting skiing in the state.

In addition to his involvement in skiing, George has undertaken various "summer jobs," including working as a fire fighter and youth soccer referee. He also spent 18 years as owner/manager of a Supercuts franchise in Santa Fe, which was honored as the chain's national franchise of the year in 1985.

George has accumulated numerous honors and awards over the years, including inductions into the Ski New Mexico, New Mexico Tourism and UNM Alumni Letterman's Association halls of fame. Even so, he called being voted into the New Mexico Sports Hall of Fame a "tremendous" honor.

"When I was coaching, every year I'd tell my skiers, 'Let's dream a dream and not rest until we make it real,'" George said. "This feels like a dream come true for me."