

sports

# Stenmark wins giant slalom for his first Olympic gold

United Press International  
WILMINGTON, N.Y. — On its face, it seems ridiculous to hold the first men's giant slalom run one day and the race for the Olympic gold medal the next. But Ingemar Stenmark made the 24-hour wait worthwhile.

The man called the "silent Swede" produced a dynamic, almost acrobatic run Tuesday, powering past Liechtenstein's Andreas Wenzel to

claim his first Winter Olympic gold medal.

"It is a great feeling," said Stenmark, in an unusually talkative mood. "I really wanted this race. It is the one giant slalom I had not won." The victory extended his winning streak in the GS to an incredible 15 going back to the start of the 1978 World Cup season.

The Swede so dominated the second-day run only one skier, Switzerland's Jacques Luethy, finished

within one second of his time. Luethy, .95 of a second slower than Stenmark, climbed from 12th place after Monday's competition to finish fifth.

Stenmark, meanwhile, jumped from third to win the gold with a time of 1:20.25 Tuesday, and a combined total of 2:40.74.

First-run leader Wenzel dropped to second, taking the silver in 2:41.49. Austria's Hans Enn claimed the bronze in 2:42.51.

Speaking in his native Swedish, then in English and German, Stenmark said he was surprised to be greeted by King Carl Gustaf of Sweden at the finish.

"He congratulated me," Stenmark said. But, asked what else the king said, Stenmark replied, "The rest of the conversation was just between us."

Stenmark had ignored the fans and reporters after the first day of competition, then snapping back, "You

always want to know what happened when I'm not first."

But he turned accessible following his victory, saying, "I didn't want to answer questions yesterday because I wanted to concentrate on today's race."

Phil Mahre of White Pass, Wash., was the top American, in 10th place with a time of 2:44.33. His twin brother, Steve, finished tied for 15th, another .61 of a second back. Cary Adgate of Boyne City, Mich., and Pete Patterson of Sun Valley, Idaho, both fell.

"I'd have to say I'm disappointed," said Phil Mahre. "But I'll be better in the slalom Friday. That's been my best World Cup race all year."

Wenzel said, "I lost the race at the top. I had trouble there yesterday but I was able to get back ahead because the others had problems on the bottom. But today I knew if they skied the race well all the way down, they'd beat me."

Wenzel's second-place finish put him in the running for a combined medal, awarded by the International Ski Federation but not part of the Olympic ceremony.

Austria's Leonhard Stock, winner of the downhill and a 26th place finisher in the GS, led the combined standings with 39.59 points, while Wenzel was second with 40.83 and Phil Mahre third with 46.99. Wenzel and Mahre were expected to finish 1-2 in the combined following the slalom, Stock's weakest event.

# Bad luck doesn't hurt Lacaze diving skill

By JOHN BRASHER  
Sports Writer

There's an old saying which says, "Life is full of its ups and downs."

Kerry Lacaze, a freshman diver for the Texas A&M swim team, is one person who has had his share of both.

Lacaze was born and raised in Natchitoches, La., a small town 70 miles south of Shreveport. When he was three years old, his mother was seriously crippled from an automobile accident, and she died five years later.

Lacaze said times were rough after the death of his mother and credits his father for keeping Lacaze, his two sisters, and one brother together during that trying period.

"My father," Lacaze said, "was one hell of a man and I really admire him. He accepted the death of Mom and took on the responsibilities of raising us."

Lacaze found his place in life when he began diving at the age of seven.

"I enjoy diving because it's a sport that focuses on the individual. It also makes me feel good both mentally and physically. It's a personal accomplishment, and it makes my dad feel proud of me."

At the age of 12, the happiness he found in diving was taken away from him when the diving team in Natchitoches broke up. For three years, Lacaze ignored athletics and didn't do much of anything except go to school.

Once again however, fate fell upon Lacaze. As though history would repeat itself, Lacaze, age 15 at the time, was seriously injured when the car he was riding in slammed head-on into a tree.

The next day, the depressed and confused teen-ager found himself laying in a hospital bed with two ruptured discs, a fractured vertebra, whiplash and several cuts and bruises.

Lacaze recalls that fateful night and said, "I was riding in the front seat and I turned around to talk to the people in the back. The girl in the back seat screamed, and when I turned around, the car had already run off the road and we were about to hit a tree. I raised my arms to cover my face and then we hit."

Lacaze underwent surgery to repair his back and was confined to a bed for about a month. Half a year later, he found himself struggling to walk and doctors told him he would probably never be able to dive again.

Lacaze said, "When the doctor told me I couldn't dive anymore, it made me more determined to want to dive. I realized the feeling handicapped people experience of not being active and not able to do the things you want to do."

While laying in the hospital bed, Lacaze decided that once he got well, he would never again neglect or abuse athletic talent and would continue to improve himself.

Fortunately, he kept that promise because it was his courage to continue diving that got him to Texas A&M.

Dean Hollingsworth, the Texas

A&M diving coach, was through Natchitoches one day and saw Lacaze practicing his diver a lengthy conversation. After a quick meal, Lacaze found himself the verge of attending Texas A&M.

In December of 1978, Lacaze came back to College Station. Hollingsworth and talked to Swimming Coach Mel Nash. Lacaze was offered a swimming scholarship that didn't have any strings attached. Lacaze accepted since then he has become one of a success story.

Lacaze enrolled at Texas A&M this semester and since he has already won three diving medals, he has a chance to qualify for the Nationals in Boston, Mass., 27-28.

The ironic thing about Lacaze is that he excels in the three diving events, yet he is not a swimmer. He has practiced on the three-meter board at Texas A&M because of his diving skills.

"When we have a home meet," Lacaze said, "we dive off the meter board because the pool is 10 feet deep. We seldom dive off the three-meter board because the bottom is shallow."

Lacaze feels he has the potential to become one of the top 10 divers in the nation in a couple of years.



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