

**LEGEND** By Rachel Oakes-Ash  
All photos kindly supplied by the Milne family

# Malcolm Milne

**LONG BEFORE DALE BEGG-SMITH'S PARENTS EVEN MET, VICTORIAN MALCOLM MILNE WAS KING OF THE HILL.** Not just any hill either, the World Cup vertical of French resort Val D'Isere. It was here that Milne made Australian history, engraving his name as winner of the World Cup downhill in 1969, a feat no Australian skier had achieved before him.

If you've skied the glacial runs of Val D'Isere and Tignes then you're familiar with Espace Killy, named after ski guru Jean Claude Killy who virtually booked a place on the winner's podium at every World Cup and Winter Olympics during this time.

Malcolm turned professional after representing Australia at two Olympic Games (first in 1968 at Grenoble aged 19 and then Sapporo in 1972) and joined Jean Claude's troupe of head-to-head parallel course racers in slalom and giant slalom.

In addition to his Olympic and World Cup performances Milne was Australian Champion for 11 years straight, a bronze medal winner at the 1970 World Championships and is now a member of Ski and Snowboard Australia. Despite this he swears in his humble style that it must be a slow news day" when Powderhound calls for a chat.

Like most elite athletes it hasn't all been glory. In 1964 Malcolm's brother, Ross Milne, died while training for the 1964 Winter Olympics. The International Olympic Committee pointed the finger at Ross for his own death and thus a champion was born. "His death motivated me in downhill," says Malcolm. "The European press said the accident happened because of the inexperience of the racer and

that Great Britain, Argentina, New Zealand and Australia shouldn't be racing. The accident didn't happen because he was a bad skier, it happened because there were other competitors stopped on the course."

Malcolm wanted to prove the IOC wrong and show the world that little-known ski nations like Australia were capable of producing downhill racers of international standard. He proved it by becoming the first non-European to beat the Europeans in downhill. Ouch.

Training with the French, he found himself the sole Australian celebrating after the race, a win he still finds hard to believe. "It's difficult racing at world level, the Austrians, the Swiss, and the French they want to win more than anyone. I look at the race courses now and wonder how they do it on that pitch. I watched the [Winter Olympics] race this year and saw the two Australians go down. I think they did really well, but to win is so hard. I can't believe I did it."

The son of a farming family, Malcolm grew up in rural Myrtleford in Victoria and didn't start skiing until his early teens. Within four years he was representing Australia in the junior championships in Hokkaido long before Niseko became the northern Thredbo.

Today, you're more likely to find him on the



MALCOLM MILNE RIPPING YET ANOTHER COURSE TO SHREDS, THIS TIME IN THREDBO.

family farm tending to beef cattle, Yalumba wine grapes and tobacco than with planks strapped to his feet. His last ski trip, three years ago, was to Canada where he spent four days on Whistler Mountain "seeing if I could ski again".

"Skiing and racing are two different sports. One is goal oriented and the other recreational. I haven't skied for years, but I do love to powder ski, so I took my son CMH heli skiing in Canada. You never lose your ability, it's like swimming or riding a bike. You may not do it for years, but you'll find it all comes back."

When asked to recall his best race he says the downhill at the Val Gardena World Championships in 1970. "It was the best race I had done. I thought I had won to be honest, but I did slow down for a fraction of a second, though I don't know why. I looked up at the board and saw my name go from top to third and for a split second felt disappointment. Then I remembered what I had done, won a bronze medal, and realised it was pretty good for an Aussie bloke."



MALCOLM CELEBRATES WORLD CUP VICTORY IN VAL D'ISERE HOISTED ON THE SHOULDERS OF THE FRENCH TEAM.

## VAL D'ISERE DEC 14, 1969

Unknowing spectators at the first men's downhill race of the alpine skiing season could hardly believe the evidence, first of their ears then of their eyes, here in the French Alps today. The winner, it seemed, with the first 20 races already down the two-mile course, was Jean-Daniel Daretwylor of Switzerland, with a time of 2:14.69, followed by Karl Schranz of Austria.

Handshakes had been offered to both when the public address announced an intermediate time of 1:20.47 higher up the mountain, the fastest thus far, for Malcolm Milne, who comes from, of all places, Australia. He held his form on the final section down to the finish to the accompaniment of the growing roar of encouragement (or was it disbelief?) and he stopped the clock at 2:13.79.

A 21-year-old farmer from Myrtleford, 100 miles from Melbourne, who did not ski until he was 14, is hardly everyone's idea of a favourite for this blue riband of Alpine skiing. Theirs [the French team with whom Milne trained] was a bitter-sweet experience on a day when the Alps were shaken to their roots.

An extract from some rag called the London Times by sports writer John Hennessy.



ROSS MILNE IN ACTION.



MALCOLM MILNE, SAPPORO OLYMPICS, 1972.