



Bonnie Blair

Success under pressure is the measure of a true champion. There are numerous winners in the world of sports but the celebrated athletes are the few who meet the challenge of pressure time after time. Bonnie Blair is undoubtedly celebrated as the speedskater who produces her best performances when it counts the most.

Bonnie began her race in the 500 meter event of the 1988 Calgary Olympics immediately after her rival Christa Rothenburger of East Germany set a world record. Not to be outdone, Bonnie proceeded to skate the 500 meters faster than any woman had before or has since, capturing the gold medal in a world record time of 39.1. This record stood for 5 years until March 1994, when at the age of 30, Blair met her ultimate goal of shattering the 39 second mark with a time of 38.99.

Four years later at the 1992 Albertville Olympics, with the world watching and a nation counting on her, Blair came through again. She blew away the field in the 500 meters, defeating her nearest competitor, Ye Qiaobo of China, by 18 hundredths of a second. The victory made Blair the first woman in Olympic history to win consecutive gold medals in the event, and the first American woman to win consecutive Winter Olympic gold medals. She made history again in the 1,000 meters, edging out Ye by just two hundredths of a second to win her second gold of the Games, and her fourth Olympic medal overall.

In 1994, Blair skated in her final Winter Olympics in Lillehammer, Norway. Supported by 60 plus members of "The Blair Bunch", Bonnie once again swept the sprint races winning gold medals in both the 500 and 1,000 meter events. By capturing her sixth career Olympic medal, Bonnie emerged as U.S. history's most decorated Winter athlete, as well as the record holder for the most gold medals (5) won by an American woman in any sport.

The United States Olympic Committee's Woman Speedskater of the Year from 1985 to 1992, Bonnie also captured the world record for overall points in the World Sprint Speed Skating Championships in 1989 by defeating defending champion and former Olympic opponent Christa Rothenburger of East Germany. She eclipsed that mark at a World Cup event in Davos in January 1992, shortly thereafter, in Calgary in April 1992, and finally again in Calgary in January, 1994.

As if competitive skating wasn't enough to fill her agenda, Bonnie was a member of the 1989 Sundance Fruit Juicer Cycling Tour, on a team with 1988 Olympic bronze medalist cyclist Connie Paraskevin Young. In the spotlight as a novice, Bonnie displayed the potential to reach world-class level, placing high in several sprint competitions, and attracting media attention wherever she pedaled.

Bonnie is widely admired for her combination of modesty and confidence. A professional writer summarized her appeal by praising her unassuming manner and charm, "Your

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modesty in accepting the medal, holding back the tears, your bright smile when thanking the Olympic official, your tender words to those you defeated - all of these characteristics endeared you to the mass of viewers in our nation and abroad.”

Bonnie began skating when she was just two years old, following in the footsteps of her five older brothers and sisters. Now retired from skating, Blair, who married Olympic teammate Dave Cruikshank, is a motivational speaker to corporations and associations. She also donates her time to a variety of charities that she organizes through the Bonnie Blair Charitable Fund.

Career Highlights

- Most decorated Winter Olympian
- 1994, Gold medalist in 500m and 1000m
- 1992, Gold medalist in 500m and 1000m
- 1988, Gold medalist in 500m
- 1988, Bronze medalist in 1000m
- 1st woman to break 39 second barrier in the 500m
- 1st American to win 3 consecutive gold medals in a Winter Olympic event
- Named one of the Century's Five Best Female Athletes by *Sports Magazine*
- 2004, Inducted in to USOC Olympic Hall of Fame
- Winner of the 2000 ESPY Award for American Female Olympian
- 1994, Named Sportswoman of the Year from *Sports Illustrated*
- 1994, Named Female Athlete of the Year from the Associated Press
- 1992, Recipient of the Sullivan Award, given to the top amateur American athlete
- 1992, Oscar Mathisen Award (being the first female winner of this award),
- 1992, ABC's *Wide World of Sports* Athlete of the Year