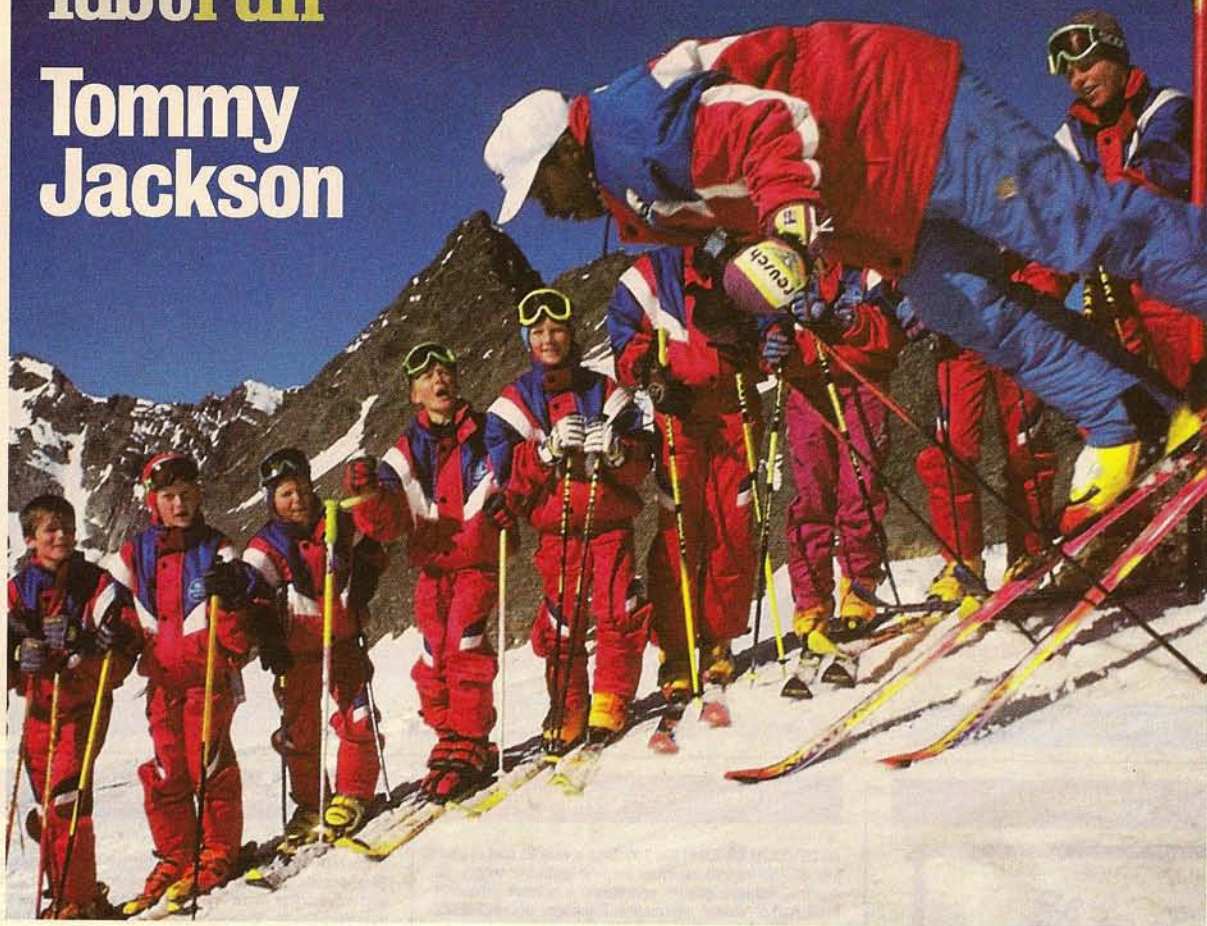


last run

Tommy Jackson



Born in the Eighties May 27, 1981 (age 14)

Heartland home Chicago, Ill.

Present pioneer Is the first American to attend the prestigious Skihauptschule Neustift ski racing academy in Austria.

Future pioneer Hopes to someday become the first African-American to make the U.S. Alpine Ski Team.

Breaking barriers "When I arrived in Austria in September, all the kids were staring at me like I was from outer space. But they got used to me and I got used to them."

Lesson No. 1 "All of my classes are in German. So my German—I had taken a two-month crash course in Chicago—has gotten much better."

Lesson No. 2 "My ski racing has improved so much in just a short time. The coaches are really good. They're great skiers and they can show me what they're talking about."

Bitten by the bamboo bug "When I was 6, I raced NASTAR. I didn't win a medal, but it was really fun. I said, 'Wow, maybe I can do this and win races. That would be cool.' When I was 7, I won a NASTAR gold medal. I was really excited, so my mom signed me up for the Wilmot (Wisc.) ski team."

Practice, practice, practice "I would train at Wilmot three nights a week and on weekends. My parents would drive me—more than an hour each way—and I would do my homework in the car, using a flashlight."

The payoff Jackson is ranked by the USSA in the top third of American ski racers his age, and he won a scholarship from the National Brotherhood of Skiers (NBS) to study and train in Austria. (The NBS is an organization of more than 14,000 black skiers.)

Family values "My mom and dad have inspired me. They started me out skiing and they've never put pressure on me. They've just always supported me."

The dream "I only have one goal in ski racing. I want to eventually race in the Olympics." —Reade Bailey