

# Hall of Fame Celebration • November 6–8 • Jump Florida

## INTRODUCING THE CLASS OF 2025 . . .



**Lyle Cameron Sr.** was a towering figure in the formative years of skydiving—an innovator, leader, and global ambassador for the sport. With a career that spanned performance, governance, and international judging, Cameron helped define competitive skydiving and elevate its public profile. He brought skydiving to television audiences through the hit series *Ripcord*, judged world-class events as one of the sport's first FAI-rated officials, and helped pioneer new standards in style and accuracy. A decorated veteran and technical visionary, his Hall of Fame induction honors a lifetime of bold ideas, enduring influence, and unwavering commitment to skydiving's evolution.



**Ken Coleman** was a world champion skydiver and visionary whose legacy forever changed how skydivers are trained. A fierce competitor and leader of the legendary Rainbow Flyers, Ken won multiple U.S. National Championships and the 1975 World Championship in Formation Skydiving. But his most enduring impact came as the principal architect of the Accelerated Freefall (AFF) Program, a revolutionary method that modernized skydiving education worldwide. Though his life was tragically cut short in 1981, Ken's influence lives on in every AFF-trained skydiver. His Hall of Fame induction honors a pioneer whose passion reshaped the future of the sport.



**Jim Cowan** is a second-generation skydiver, champion canopy formation competitor, and military training innovator whose influence spans more than 45 years and 25,000 jumps. As co-founder of Quantum Leap Skydiving Center and a nine-time national champion, Jim helped shape the evolution of canopy formation, setting nine world records and representing the U.S. at eight World Championships. A trusted mentor, safety leader, and instructor to both civilian and elite military units, his expertise has shaped global standards in parachuting education. Jim's Hall of Fame induction honors a lifetime of service, discipline, and enduring impact on the sport's highest levels.



**Cliff Dobson** has spent more than 50 years advancing skydiving through excellence in instruction, competition, and innovation. With over 9,600 jumps, he represented the U.S. on nine national teams, earning world and national medals in canopy formation and relative work. As founder of Skydive Tampa Bay, he introduced more than 60,000 people to the sport, many of whom became licensed skydivers and record holders. A forward-thinker, he operated one of the U.S.'s first outdoor wind tunnels and helped pioneer instructor training worldwide. Cliff's Hall of Fame induction honors a legacy of mentorship, leadership, and lifelong dedication to skydiving's growth.



**Gary J. Dupuis** has been a force behind some of skydiving's most transformative milestones. From building the first tandem rig in 1966 to co-developing the AFF program adopted worldwide, Gary's influence runs deep. A Master Rigger, examiner, and DC-3 pilot, he helped establish DeLand as a skydiving epicenter and trained thousands through landmark events like "The Nationals" and the Z-Hills Turkey Meet. His innovations in equipment design and training methodology have shaped the modern skydiving experience. Gary's Hall of Fame induction celebrates a legacy of fearless ingenuity, technical mastery, and unwavering dedication to the advancement of the sport.

**Matt "Rook" Nelson** has transformed skydiving through competition, innovation, and visionary leadership. With 13 world titles and 26,000+ jumps, he helped pioneer vertical formation flying and co-organized the historic 164-way world record. As CEO of Skydive Chicago, he built one of the sport's most iconic drop zones, home to Summerfest and two World Championships. A skilled pilot and Hollywood stunt performer, Rook's influence reaches beyond the sky, inspiring new generations through mentorship and community-building. His Hall of Fame induction celebrates not only his elite accomplishments, but his unmatched role in shaping the global future of skydiving.



**Tom Piras** was a world champion skydiver, visionary coach, and architect of modern skydiving training. A four-time U.S. National Champion and 1985 World Champion in 4-way formation skydiving, Tom's influence reshaped the competitive landscape. He pioneered professional coaching, co-founded Skydive University, and created systems that remain the foundation for elite team training worldwide. From leading the first 100-way world record to catalyzing the global adoption of AADs, his impact reaches every corner of the sport. Tom's Hall of Fame induction honors a legacy of excellence, innovation, and safety that continues to guide skydivers across generations.



**Wendy "Kiwi" Smith** is a pioneering aerial cinematographer, safety leader, and mentor whose influence has shaped the sport of skydiving across the globe. With over 22,800 jumps, 10 world records, 2 European records, 3 Guinness World Records, and an Emmy Award, she has captured some of the most iconic and complex formation skydives in history. As Chief Safety Officer for Everest Skydive and founder of the Freefly Kiwi School, Wendy has led with vision, precision, and passion. Her Hall of Fame induction honors a career defined by artistic excellence, technical leadership, and a lifelong commitment to skydiving's progression.



**Bill Wenger** has dedicated over 50 years to shaping the sport of skydiving through leadership, competition, and mentorship. A world-record holder and former Golden Knight, he earned gold at the 1978 World Cup and led the U.S. Air Force Academy to 19 collegiate national titles. As a USPA board member, master rigger, pilot, and meet director, Bill elevated standards in safety, training, and competition. His impact spans every level of the sport—from first-time jumpers to elite international teams. Bill's Hall of Fame induction honors a lifetime of service, excellence, and enduring influence across the global skydiving community.



Scan QR code above for full biographies of the Hall of Fame Class of 2025!

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Visit our website by scanning the barcode or go to [www.skydivingmuseum.org](http://www.skydivingmuseum.org) and click on "Events" then "Celebration Event Details."

You will find more details about the Hall of Fame Celebration, the Class of 2025, lodging options, sponsorship opportunities, and more! If you would like a printable registration form, please contact Nancy (Kemble) Wilhelm at [nkemble@skydivingmuseum.org](mailto:nkemble@skydivingmuseum.org).



## Schedule of Events (Subject to Change)

### Thursday, November 6 • Jump Florida

All Day	Fun Jumping
TBD	10-Way Speed Competition (3 Rounds)
4–Dusk	Early Bird Registration and Packet Pick-Up
4–10 pm	Early Bird Reception/Pioneers Lounge

### Friday, November 7 • Jump Florida

All Day	Fun Jumping
10 am–3 pm	Registration and Packet Pick-Up
10 am–4 pm	Pioneers Lounge Open
11 am	Affiliate Flag Jump
11:30 am	Affiliate Spotlight Awards
12–1:30 pm	Pioneers of Excellence Award Presentation/Tribute Jump/Lunch
2:30 pm	Forum
4 pm	Sport Accuracy DEMO Challenge #1
5 pm	Path of Excellence Reception/Mediterranean Buffet/Award Presentation/Pyrotechnic Tribute Jump

### Saturday, November 8 • Jump Florida

All Day	Fun Jumping
9 am–2 pm	Registration and Packet Pick-Up
10 am–3 pm	Pioneers Lounge Open
10 am	Sport Accuracy DEMO Challenge #2
10:30 am	Forum
11:45 am	Sport Accuracy DEMO Challenge #3/Sport Accuracy DEMO Challenge Awards
1 pm	Forum

### Omni Orlando Resort at ChampionsGate

6–7 pm	Hall of Fame Cocktail Hour
7–10 pm	Hall of Fame Banquet & Induction Ceremony

## The 2025 Trustees Award Goes to . . . Skydive Perris and the Conatser Family



Skydive Perris, one of the premier drop zones in the world, has graciously hosted the museum's annual Hall of Fame Celebration three times. This exceptional team has consistently gone

above and beyond, finding innovative ways to engage the skydiving community in supporting the museum. Their efforts to raise funds and increase awareness include signature events like the Holiday Boogie, which raised over \$25,000 through a portion of jump proceeds and a creative raffle. The Conatser family—Ben, Diane, Melanie, and Pat—serve as enthusiastic museum Ambassadors and steadfast supporters. For all these contributions and many more, the Board of Trustees is proud to present the 2025 Trustees Award to Skydive Perris and the Conatser Family.

## The Path of Excellence Award Goes to . . .



The 1987 film project *From Wings Came Flight*, produced by Norman Kent Productions, LLC, stands as one of the most inspirational and influential skydiving films of all time. Its custom-made design, exceptional quality, and meticulously choreographed skydiving sequences set a new standard. The discipline of Freestyle skydiving, which had never been viewed by anyone before, opened the door to creativity in our sport and inspired many to create new disciplines which we enjoy today, such as Freefly, Angle, Head-Up, and Head-Down, to name a few. It's Impossible to measure the thousands of skydivers that came into our sport as a result of this project, but it is clear to everyone that this film project had a huge impact in the direction, growth, appeal and acceptance of skydiving in inside skydiving as well as to the general public's eye.

## The Pioneers of Excellence Award Goes to . . .



The 1975 US Freefall Exhibition Team was sanctioned by the USPA to perform demonstration jumps at the 1975 US Nationals and the 1975 World RW Championships at Warendorf, Germany. Scenes from what would become the 16mm film *Wings* were shown to hundreds of jumpers from around the world in Germany. Coming from an era of mostly round stars and moving to sequential RW, many new techniques were being experimented with, like flying pieces, no-contact, back-ins, side docks, etc. Color-coordinated jump suits were used to make it easy to see the different formations and transitions. A whole new framework of skills had to be incorporated, including planning a sequential maneuver, where to grip, how to grip, and the emphasis on planning and dirt diving. New ways of how to signal or "key" breaks from one formation to another had to be established, as well as how to break off from the formations. The list of innovations is endless . . .