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U.S. Team Prepares for 2007 NACAC Mountain Running Championships

Colorado Springs, CO --- The Canadian Trail and Mountain Running Association (CTMRA) in association with the Canmore Challenge Trail will host the fourth North American Central American Caribbean (NACAC) Mountain Running Championship in Canmore, Alberta, on Sunday, July 28. This up and down event will act as a tune-up for NACAC teams in preparation for the World Mountain Running Trophy (WMRT) events to be held in Saillon, Switzerland on September 15.

At an altitude of 1325 meters, Canmore is a one-hour drive from Calgary. The race site is the Canmore Nordic Center, venue for the 1988 Winter Olympic cross country ski and biathlon events, which recently completed a \$16 million dollar renovation. The elevation at the Center is 1425 meters.

The course will be a 12 kilometer route for all competitors (men, women, juniors, masters) and will start at the Nordic Centre, descend to the Bow River, climb back up to the top of the Nordic Centre Trails, and loop back down to the start/finish area. The two-lap course will have an elevation gain of about 450m. According to race director Phil Villeneuve, “The course terrain at the nordic center is 90% on hard-packed terrain whether they are open ski trails or single track – it’s essentially a hard/fast running surface. The only thing to consider for shoes would be if rain was in the forecast...which would make some of the hard pack ground surface a bit more slick – especially on one steep climbing section. The downhill are the same hardpacked surfaces, with the exception of one softer (loamy soil) single track/twisty turn section.”

Race day will include a sponsor/exhibitor village, open 1km, 6km and 12km races (the latter to be run concurrently with the championship events), with awards in the evening. For more information visit:

www.mountainrunning.ca

The U.S. hosted the NACAC event in 2004 and 2005 and Mexico hosted in 2006. Team USA won the first two years, but didn’t compete in 2006. “We are looking forward to this year’s competition and hoping to bring home gold,” said team manager and USATF Mountain Ultra Trail Council Chair Nancy Hobbs.

Bios of the 2007 team follow.

Eric Blake, 28, New Britain, CT, was second for the U.S. at last year’s World Mountain Running Trophy Race in Bursa, Turkey finishing in 11th overall. An uphill specialist, Blake won the 2006 Mount Washington Road Race where he was crowned the USA National Mountain Running Championships in a time of 1:01:09 besting second-place finisher Paul Low by 28 seconds. In 2005 Blake finished second to Simon Gutierrez at Mount Washington and was third American in 2004. Blake was fifth at the USA National Mountain Running Championships in Vail in 2003. On June 24, 2006 Blake set the *treadmill marathon world record* of 2:21:40 in Farmington, CT at Malibu Fitness. (The former world record was 2:23:58.) He was 28th in the 2004 World Mountain Trophy in Sauze D'Oulx, Italy and 23rd in the 2005 World Trophy in Wellington, New Zealand. He was 33rd in the 2004 U.S. Olympic Marathon Trials. In Lyman Memorial High School in Lebanon, Connecticut, he was the 1996 state open cross-country champion. He is a member of the Boston Athletic Association and is the Assistant Men’s and Women’s Cross-Country and Track and Field Coach at Central Connecticut State University. Says Blake, “I am really looking forward to representing the USA in the NACAC Championships. I know the other countries, especially Canada, will put up a tough challenge but we should contend for the team championship.”

James Nielsen, 27, Palo Alto, CA, is fairly new to trail and mountain running. He ran at UC San Diego where he was a two-time NCAA National Champion (DIII) in the 5 km and a four-time NCAA All American (cross country and track). While at UCSD he was a three-time Athlete of the Year. He ran as a transfer/grad student at Stanford and was part of NCAA West Regional Cross Country Championship Team. Nielsen ran 8:48 for the steeplechase and was a scoring member at the Nike Farm Team’s USA Cross Country National Championship Team. He also recently won the Eugene Marathon in 2:21:01 and qualified for the 2008 US Olympic Marathon Trials. His PR’s include 1500 meters in 3:49, 5 km in 14:13, 10 km in 29:52, and half marathon in 1:07:00. Nielsen is presently finishing his PhD in Electrical Engineering at Stanford and works at an enterprise software start-up in Palo Alto doing business development. He is also a professional triathlete. Says Nielsen, “I am both honored and excited about the opportunity to represent the U.S. at these championships. I’ve been excited about mountain running for many years and I’m looking forward to some international competition.”

Nick Schuetze, 25, Portland, OR, has an extensive running background including track, road, and cross country. In High School (Westview in Beaverton, OR) he set a PR at 400 meters in 54 seconds. His PR in the mile is 4:12 set in 2002 and matched in 2007. His 3 km and 5 km track PRs were set in 2007 timed in 8:18:79 and 14:18 respectively. On the road in 2006 he ran 29:52 for the 10km to win in course-record time the Pints2Pasta 10 km in Portland and placed among the top five at the Willamette Invitational 8 km timed in 24:23.65. His cross country PRs include 5km 15:25 (Bend Invitational 1999), 8 km 24:38 (Iowa Pre-National 2003), 10 km 30:51 (West Regional 2003 in Portland), and 12 km 41:46.76 at the Cross Country Nationals in Boulder this past February. Schuetze balances the stresses of training with schoolwork and teaching. He is presently completing graduate studies in Education at the University of Portland and teaching high school physics. Schuetze has a goal for track this year to go under 14:10. "As I look forward to the NACAC Championships, I have no idea what to expect. I am excited for the race as an opportunity to race up and down the hills and mountains. That is a type of running that I have always enjoyed, but I've never been able to race on a course that I felt like really tested my abilities. The Mt. Tam race (July 15 in Sausalito, CA) will be a good build up to the NACAC race, hopefully giving me some taste of what to expect in Canada. Following the NACAC race I will be training in Mammoth Lakes, CA in hopes of running an Olympic Trials qualifying time at the end of August or early September."

Brandy Erholtz, 29, Bailey, CO, accepted her spot on the team after former team member Nicole Hunt gave up her spot due to injury. Erholtz finished third at the Teva Mountain Games 10km in Vail, CO, on June 3, was fourth at the final Teva U.S. Mountain Running selection race – the Mt. Tam Trophy Race on July 15. She has the following PRs • 5k --17:49 (04) • 8K --28:41(06) • 10K--36:32(06) • 10 Mile 59:45(05). Erholtz is a schoolteacher.

Lisa Goldsmith, 42, Nederland, CO, was on the gold-medal winning squad at last year's World Trophy. She earned her spot on the 2006 mountain team (her second) with her decisive win at the Vail Mountain Trophy Race. Goldsmith represented the U.S. at the World Trophy in Upice, Czech Republic in 1997 where she was the first American woman finisher. To date in 2007 Goldsmith has several race victories including a win (Pairs with Steve Ilg) at the Mt. Taylor Quadrathlon and Pueblo Spring Run-Off 10 miler. She was fourth at the USATF National Masters Cross Country Championships in February, and 43rd at the Boston Marathon (second master). Goldsmith is also a two-time winner of the Pikes Peak Ascent ('05 and '06) and a masters' winner from the 2006 Mount Washington Road Race where she was fifth overall. In 2005 and 2006 she was named USATF Masters Mountain Runner of the Year. Goldsmith is a massage therapist. She says the following about the upcoming NACAC event, "I am honored and psyched to race with the U.S. team and travel to fabulous, BEAUTIFUL Canada; The trip can be nothing but terrific considering the people and the venue!"

Chris Lundy, 36, Sausalito, CA, is a three-time member of the Teva U.S. Mountain Running Team. She was on the gold-medal squad at last year's World Trophy finishing 15th overall and was 18th overall, second American, at the World Mountain Trophy Race in Wellington, New Zealand in 2005. She made her third consecutive team this year by winning the USA 10km Trail Championships in Steamboat Springs, CO, on June 30. In November Lundy finished 6th at the Mt. Obudu Mountain Race. She was fourth at the 2006 Mount Washington Road Race and fifth at the Vail Mountain Trophy Race. She finished fourth (second American) at the 2004 USA10 km Trail Championships in Vail. She was 14th at the New Haven 20 km in 2004 in a time of 1:13:31. At the 2004 Zippy 5-kilometer race in Golden Gate Park, Lundy finished second in a talented field with a time of 17:01. She finished 23rd at the '04 U.S. Olympic Trials Marathon with a time of 2:41:55 and recently finished 12th overall (fifth in the U.S. Championships division) at the Boston Marathon. A graduate of the University Pennsylvania, Lundy is a member of the Impala Racing Team and is a veterinarian.

For additional information on the USA Mountain Running Program visit www.usatf.org and www.trailrunner.com.

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