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Cranmore Hill Climb offers Triple Mountain Challenge this Sunday

*Up for grabs: USA Mountain Running Championship Title, NACAC Mountain Championship Title,
and team slots on the 2009 Teva U.S. Mountain Running Team*

NORTH CONWAY, NH — Top U.S. mountain runners will compete in New England this Sunday, June 28, at the Cranmore Hill Climb to earn the title of USA Mountain Champion. This is the second time the five-year-old Championships (held since 2003, but not in 2005) have come to North Conway; the first was in 2007 where Coloradoans Rickey Gates and Anita Ortiz were victorious.

Gates is in stellar form coming off a sub-one hour time to win this year's Mount Washington Road Race on June 20. He will face challengers to include two-time mountain champ (on uphill years in '06 and '08) Eric Blake who was runner-up to Gates at Mount Washington this year, and Joe Gray, third at Mount Washington and second at the Teva Mountain Games 10km on June 6 in Vail (where Gates finished third), top masters runner Simon Gutierrez, fifth at Mount Washington and fourth in Vail.

These four men will make up Team USA in this year's North American Central American Caribbean (NACAC) Mountain Running Championships and will compete against athletes from Mexico and Canada for team honors. They will also vie for a spot on this year's Teva U.S. Mountain Running Team which will compete in Campodolcino, Italy, September 6.

Matt Byrne, fourth at Mount Washington this year and a member of last year's bronze medal winning squad at the World Mountain Championships (along with Gates, Gray, Gutierrez, and Zac Freudenberg) would like to earn a spot on his second mountain team. Freudenberg, Aaron Saft, Jason Bryant, Kevin Tilton, and Shiloh Mielke are all hoping for a top finish at Cranmore where the top three U.S. men a spot on this year's squad.

The women's field boasts as much depth as the men's. Starting with the four women on Team USA in the NACAC competition which includes last year's NACAC Mountain Champion Kasie Enman, 2007 USA Mountain Champion and last week's runaway winner at Mount Washington Brandy Erholtz who was the top U.S. woman at Worlds last year, Christine Lundy, second in 2007 at Cranmore and the 2007 NACAC Mountain Champion as well as a member of the two-time gold medal winning women's team at World's ('06, '07), and Laura Haefeli, individual bronze medalist at Worlds 2007 and a four-time USA Trail Running Champion.

Ready to challenge these veteran mountain runners and hoping to earn the sole spot on the mountain team for women at Cranmore will be Coloradoans Megan Lund and Gina Lucrezi, both 25 years old and having recently finished third and fifth respectively in the Teva 10km in Vail (Erholtz and Haefeli went one-two at Vail). Also in the hunt for a top finish, Trish Steidl, 32, Seattle, and North Carolinian Amber Moran, 30, Arden. Cranmore women's champion in 2007, and a five-time mountain team member, Anita Ortiz has been training for ultra distance events this year and will be competing in her first 100 mile event at Western States this weekend.

"Paul Kirsch has done a great job with the event adding all of the components we requested this year and has created a course that will closely mirror the Worlds' course in Italy. After hosting the USA Mountain Championships in 2007 Paul tweaked the course a bit and it will surely test the athletes' strength, speed, and endurance," said Nancy Hobbs, USATF Mountain Ultra Trail Running chairperson and manager of the Teva U.S. Mountain Running Team. "Like everyone else, I'm excited to see so many of our top mountain runners compete at Cranmore this weekend and look forward to a super event."

Race entries for Cranmore currently represent 22 states, along with Mexico and Canada. The course at Cranmore Mountain resort is an up/down two-lap route featuring approximately 2,400 feet of vertical gain over 11 kilometers.

Although the race features elite athletes, it is open to competitors of all ages who are looking for a challenging course. Finishers at past Cranmore Hill Climbs have included runners as young as seven and as old as 75. USATF will award medals to the top ten open competitors in both the men's and women's divisions, medals to the top three in masters' age groups in five year increments starting at age 40, and

prize money as follows (equal for men and women): \$200 first place \$150 second place; \$100 third place; \$50 first place master. There is also USATF team competition.

Race sponsors include Inov-8, Cranmore Mountain Resort, USATF-New England, Hammer Nutrition, Julbo Eyewear, CW-X Conditioning Wear, Tech-4o sports watches, Fuel Belt, OrthoLite insoles, and the White Mountain Milers. To learn more about the race or to register, visit www.whitemountainmilers.com/cranmore.

The second and final Teva U.S. Mountain Running Team selection race will be held in Colorado Springs at the July 26 Cheyenne Canon Mountain Race presented by Walmart where the top two U.S. women and the top two U.S. men will earn a berth on this year's team.

Elite athlete bios for the Cranmore Hill Climb follow.

On the men's side:

Eric Blake, 29, New Britain, CT, is a four-time Teva U.S. Mountain Running Team member finishing third for the U.S. men last year in Switzerland. He represented the U.S. at the NACAC Mountain Running Championships in 2007 on the gold-medal squad. He won the USA National Mountain Running Championships in 2006 and 2008. On June 24, 2006 Blake set the *treadmill marathon world record* of 2:21:40 in Farmington, CT at Malibu Fitness.

Matthew Byrne, 34, Scranton, PA, was a member of the 2008 Mountain Running Team and finished sixth at the 2008 Mount Washington Road Race. Byrne has a strong road race resume. In the past two years he posted a 2:25:48 (Boston Marathon), 1:06:01 (Houston Half Marathon), and 2:21:50 (Steamtown Marathon). He is a two-time Olympic Marathon Trials qualifier (2004 & 2006). His 10 km track PR is 29:49, and his 5 km PR is 14:31. Byrne is a graduate of St. Joseph's University where he earned his degree in Marketing. He is employed full time at the Philadelphia Runner.

Zac Freudenberg, 30, St. Louis, MO, was a member of the 2008 bronze medal winning Teva U.S. Mountain Running Team. He finished seventh at the 2008 Mt. Washington Road Race. His 1500 m PR is 3:58, his 3000 m steeplechase PR is 9:12, his 5 km PR is 14:48 and his 10 km PR is 30:35. In 2008, his times include 24:30 (5 miles) and 2:24:46 (marathon). He ran 3:56:00 to finish third overall at the Pikes Peak Marathon in 2006, and ran the 2007 Jungfrau Marathon in 3:14:48 to finish eighth. He competed at Division III indoor and outdoor track and cross country for Beloit College and was a two-time national qualifier in cross country and once in track in the 3000 m steeplechase.

Rickey Gates, 28, Boulder, CO, made his third consecutive Teva U.S. Mountain Running Team in 2008 with his third place finish at Mount Washington. He was the first American at the World Mountain Running Trophy in Switzerland leading the men to a bronze-medal finish. Gates raced in Europe for most of the summer and fall garnering several wins and top finishes in Austria, Norway, Italy, and Slovenia. In 2007 he had back-to-back weekend wins at the USA Mountain Running Championships and the USA 10 km Trail Championships and was also named the 2007 USATF Mountain Runner of the Year. Gates once won America's Uphill (held annually in March) on Aspen Mountain racing in a clown suit.

Joseph Gray, 24, Lakewood, WA, placed fourth at the USA Mountain Running Championships earning a spot on his first Teva U.S. Mountain Running Team. He was the second U.S. finisher at the World Mountain Trophy – 16th place – in Sierre Crans Montana, Switzerland, and a scoring member of the U.S. bronze medal team. He was the top U.S. finisher at Challenge Stellina in Susa, Italy, Kitzbuhelerhorn in Kitzbuehel, Austria, and Skaala Uphill Challenge in Loen, Norway. He also was the first finisher in the Canadian Mountain Running National Championship at Mt Seymour, Canada, and won the Northwest Mountain Running Championship, in Mt Hood, OR.

Simon Gutierrez, 43, Alamosa, CO, was the 2008 USA Mountain Running National Master Champion setting a masters' course record at Mount Washington and finishing in fifth place just behind Gray. Gutierrez won the La Sportiva Berry Picker in July 2008, the second and final Teva U.S. Mountain Running Team selection race where he made his seventh consecutive team. He won the World Masters

Mountain Running Championships in the Czech Republic (his third consecutive win) and was the fourth U.S. finisher at the World Mountain Trophy finishing in 25th place. He is a three-time USATF masters' mountain runner of the year and a two-time winner of the USATF open mountain runner of the year award. He is a three-time USA world cross country team member and a 1983 High School cross country All American. He is the 2008 USATF Club Cross Country Masters Champion and the 2009 USATF Masters Cross Country Champion. At age 17 Gutierrez set the still standing road 10km record of 29:45.

Shiloh Mielke 29, Asheville, NC is a two-time member of the Teva U.S. Mountain Running Team and multi-time winner of the 17.8 mile Shut In Ridge Trail Race in his hometown. His PRs include a 29:48 10 km and a 14:35 5 km. Mielke won the 1997 and 1998 NCHSSA Men's Cross Country State Championships, the State Championships in the 2 mile in 1997, 1998, 1999 and the mile state championship in 1999.

Kevin Tilton, 27, Conway, NH is a two-time member of the Teva U.S. Mountain Running Team and has finished as high as fifth at Mount Washington. He is a multi-time winner of the Jackson 10km and White Mountain Milers Half Marathon. Tilton won the Cranmore Hill Climb the last time it was an uphill-only race. He finished in the top three in 2005 at Cranmore and was second in 2008.

Other elite runners on the men's side include Justin Fyffe, (East Dummerston, VT), John Tribbia (Boulder, CO), Jesse Armijo (Albuquerque, NM), Kris Haughton (Albuquerque, NM), Juan Ortega (Albuquerque, NM), Tommy Manning, (Colorado Springs, CO), and Aaron Saft (Asheville, NC)

On the women's side:

Brandy Erholtz, 31, Bailey, CO, was the 2008 USATF Mountain Runner of the Year in only her second year as a "mountain runner" and recently won the Native Eyewear Spring Runoff 10km trail race at the Teva Mountain Games in Vail, CO. She finished third at the LaraBar 10km and was the USA National Mountain Running Champion at Mt. Washington where she made her first Teva U.S. Mountain Running Team. She finished third at both the USA 8km Trail Running Championships and the La Sportiva Berry Picker. Erholtz was the Pikes Peak Ascent champion and also posted wins at the final La Sportiva Mountain Cup Race in Vail and the Black Canyon Ascent setting a course record. She was the top U.S. finisher at the World Mountain Running Trophy finishing in 11th place. Erholtz is employed as a schoolteacher.

Laura Haefeli, 41, Del Norte, CO, was the 2004 and 2005 USATF Mountain Runner of the Year and was the 2008 USATF Masters Mountain Runner of the Year. She won the LaraBar 10km and the USA 8km Trail Championships. She was the USA National Mountain Running Masters champion in 2008 at Mt. Washington, setting a masters course record and finishing in third place. She earned a spot on the Teva U.S. Mountain Running Team with her second-place finish at the La Sportiva Berry Picker. She finished in 44th place at the World Mountain Running Trophy which was her fourth U.S. team appearance at a Trophy event ('04, '05, '07, and '08). Laura and her husband Tom are beekeepers and sell honey and wax. She is the mother of three young children and is also a high school cross country coach.

Megan Lund, 25, Basalt, CO is coming off a fourth place finish at the Native Eyewear Spring Runoff and also competed in the U.S. Olympic Marathon Trials in 2008. She is a graduate of the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs and holds personal bests of 2:41:59 (Marathon), 35:51 (10km), 17:26 (5km) and 5:22 in the mile. She graces the cover of *Trail Runner* magazine's August 2009 issue.

Christine Lundy, 38, Sausalito, CA is a three-time member of the Teva U.S. Mountain Running Team. She was on the two gold-medal squads at the World Mountain Running Trophy races in 2006 and 2007. Lundy was the second American at Cranmore in 2007 when it last served as a Mountain Team qualifying race. She went on to win the USA 10km Trail Championships in Steamboat Springs, CO, just a week later. Lundy has represented the U.S. in the Pan American games in the marathon, and is a two-time

qualifier for the U.S. Olympic Marathon Trails in 2004 and 2008. A graduate of the University Pennsylvania, Lundy is a member of the Impala Racing Team and is employed as a veterinarian.

Amber Moran, 31, Arden, NC is an accomplished trail, ultra, mountain and road runner who is a multi-time winner of the Shut-In Ridge 17.8 Mile Trail Race, finished 12th in the USATF 10 Mile Road Championships, 5th at the USATF 25kn Championships and holds personal bests of 17:15 in the 5km, 35:13 in the 10km. Amber works as a Public Health Nurse and is a volunteer coach for Girls On the Run.

Trish Steidl, 33, Seattle, WA is a an experienced marathon and ultra runner who is multi-time winner of the Seattle Marathon, a top-three finisher at the US 50 Mile Trail Championships, and barely missed qualifying for the U.S. Olympic Marathon trials in 2004 and 2008. She is also the head cross country coach at Seattle University and rowed for the University of Washington winning three NCAA Division I National Championships between 1995 and 1999.

Other women competing at Cranmore include Gina Lucrezi (Colorado Springs, CO), 2006 U.S. Olympic Ski Team member Abby Larson (Salt Lake City, UT), Marie Elliot (Bennington, Ontario), and Sarah Burger (Montreal, Quebec).

For additional information on the USA Mountain Running Program visit www.usmrt.com, www.trailrunner.com, and www.usatf.org. For information on the World Champs visit www.wmra.info.

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