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## 2007 Teva U.S. Mountain Running Team Members Victorious at Larabar 10k Spring RunOff

Vail, CO --- Coloradoans Rickey Gates, 27, Aspen, and Laura Haefeli, 40, Del Norte, were victorious at today's 10km Trail Race, one of the final events of the seventh annual Teva Mountain Games. Gates and Haefeli were members of the 2007 Teva U.S. Mountain Running Team and both hope for a top finish at the USA Mountain Running Championships to be held on June 21 in Gorham, NH at the Mount Washington Road Race which would earn them berths on the 2008 mountain team.

With \$5,000 in prize money at stake, the event attracted top mountain runners to the start line including, on the men's side, top U.S. finisher at last year's World Mountain Running Trophy event, Payton Batliner, 24, Boulder – who like Haefeli and Gates is preparing to race at Mount Washington – and multi-time mountain team member Simon Gutierrez, Alamosa, now a masters athlete, who is still giving the younger competitors a run for the money. Add to the mix a race day entrant – Kenyan Meshack Kirwa, 33, and Joseph Gray, 24, Oklahoma City, OK, a former collegiate steeplechaser who is hoping to earn a spot on his first Teva U.S. Mountain Running Team this year.

For the women, Haefeli, individual bronze medalist and team gold medalist from the 2007 World Mountain Running Trophy, was the pre-race favorite. At last year's event Haefeli placed second. Third place finisher from last year and U.S. team member at last year's NACAC Mountain Racing Team Brandy Erholtz, 33, Bailey, CO, was also slated to race. Erholtz, like Gray, hopes to make her first Teva U.S. Mountain Running Team this year.

Other past mountain team members entered in the event included Lisa Isom, 36, Edwards, CO, a member of the bronze-medal winning women's team from 2004, Kelli Lusk, 38, Manitou Springs, CO, Andy Ames, 45, Boulder, CO, and junior team member Jonny Stevens, 18, Vail.

Gutierrez sprinted from the start line and had the early lead into the first turn. The 42-year-old physical therapist from Alamosa, Colorado and last year's USATF Masters Mountain Runner of the Year, would finish in the top five and earn top masters honors for the event.

However, it was Rickey Gates, 2007 USATF Mountain Runner of the Year, who started out conservatively and inched his way through the lead pack to take the lead and win with an impressive time of 39:44, just 22 seconds ahead of his nearest rival. Gates had told friends the night before the race that he hoped to go under 40 minutes for the race course, a goal that he realized on race day. For the win Gates earned \$1000.

In close pursuit of Gates were a threesome led by Kirwa, followed closely by Batliner and Gray. Just beyond the bridge leading from the single-track trail to the paved section of the course about ¼ mile from the finish line, Batliner shadowed Kirwa. Showing his leg speed, Batliner, who race for CU in his collegiate years, passed Kirwa. Gray turned it up a notch for an all-out sprint to the finish, making up ground to pass Kirwa and finish within a hundredth of a second of Batliner. After the race Gray said he was looking forward to Mount Washington and racing with Gates and Batliner.

Haefeli led the women's race through the first climb, and was strong and solid throughout the course to decisively win in a time of 46:30 by nearly two minutes over 23-year-old Sarah Shepard who finished in 48:29. Erholtz rounded out the top three in 48:54. After the race Erholtz said she was ahead of Shepard and was passed on one of the final climbs and said, "I lost concentration for a few seconds and she passed me. I saw her accelerate, and immediately tried to catch her, but I lost some time and had to settle for third today."

The race boasted 294 finishers (compared with the first time the race was held in 2002 when 78 racers competed) with a breakdown of 61% men and 39% women.

In this World Mountain Running Trophy uphill-only year (to be held in Sierre-Crans Montana, Switzerland on September 14 – [www.wmrt2008.org/pages/fr/](http://www.wmrt2008.org/pages/fr/)), the Teva Mountain Games event is an up/down course, yet is still a good indicator of early season fitness for mountain runners. Prior to the event Batliner and Gray both said they were training primarily with uphill courses in mind (ie: Mount Washington, the second selection race on July 20 in Vail, and Worlds).

Top Finishers: (complete results at [www.tevamountaingames.com](http://www.tevamountaingames.com))

Men:

- 1) Rickey Gates, 39:44 - \$1000
- 2) Payton Batliner, 40:06 - \$750
- 3) Joseph Gray, 40:06 - \$500
- 4) Meshak Kirwa, 40:07 - \$250
- 5) Simon Gutierrez, 40:49 (top master)
- 25) Jonny Stevens, 45:46

Women:

- 1) Laura Haefeli, 46:30 - \$1000 (top master)
- 2) Sarah Shepard, 48:29 - \$750
- 3) Brandy Erholtz, 48:54 - \$500
- 4) Sarah Pizzo, 49:24 - \$250

For additional information on upcoming events and the Teva U.S . Mountain Running Team and its sponsors, visit the websites listed below:

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USA Mountain Running Championships  
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USA Track & Field  
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