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Trio Of American Olympic Marathon Medalists Adds Luster To 2018 Credit Union Cherry Blossom Run Festivities

Joan Benoit Samuelson, Meb Keflezighi and Deena Kastor Highlight Race and Health & Fitness Expo Lineups

March 27, 2018, Washington, DC: The 2018 Credit Union Cherry Blossom Ten Mile and 5K Run-Walk, to be held on April 8, will truly offer something for everyone with an interest in distance running. In addition to hosting the 2017-18 Professional Road Running Organization (PRRO) Championship, and the Road Runners Club of America (RRCA) National 10-Mile Championship - both detailed in previous press releases - America's three most highly decorated marathon runners will be making appearances and signing autographs leading up to and including race day.

"We are pleased to have true American marathon royalty appearing at our Health and Fitness Expo this year," said Event Director Phil Stewart. "Joan, Deena and Meb have been the dominant names in American marathon running going back to the 1980s when Joan won the gold medal in the first women's Olympic Marathon in 1984. This is a rare, must-attend event for runners and fans."

Winner of the inaugural Women's Olympic Marathon in 1984 in Los Angeles, **Joan Benoit Samuelson** returns to run the 10-mile race for the fourth year in a row, and for the sixth time since 2010. On each previous occasion, "Joanie," as she is known to all, has won her age group; she set a single-age record for 59-year-old women last year with a time of 1:04:01. As she moves into the 60-64 age group this year, she'll be taking aim at the time of 1:08:17, which is the single-age record for 60-year-old women. In addition to running the 46th Runner's Rite of Spring®, Joanie will be speaking at the Health & Fitness Expo, to be held at the National Building Museum, on Saturday, April 7th at noon, and will be signing autographs from 1-2 p.m.

As he did in 2016, 2004 Olympic Marathon Silver Medalist **Mebrahtom "Meb" Keflezighi** will pace runners yearning to break the coveted 60-minute barrier for 10 miles. Having retired from competitive running following last fall's TCS New York City Marathon, Meb loves nothing more than "running with the people." Capitol Hill staffers entered in Cherry Blossom's Capitol Hill Competition will have the opportunity to meet Meb at the Capitol Visitor's Center on Thursday morning, April 5th, between 11:30 a.m. and 2 p.m. Meb will also be speaking and signing autographs at the Health & Fitness Expo on both Friday and Saturday - he'll speak at 3 p.m. both days, and sign autographs from 4-5 p.m.

Deena Kastor, 2004 Olympic Marathon Bronze Medalist, will be making her first appearance at the Credit Union Cherry Blossom Ten Mile and 5K Run-Walk. While she won't be running, Deena will be promoting the release of her first book, *Let Your Mind Run: A Memoir of Thinking My Way to Victory*. With an expected shipping date of April 10th, Health & Fitness Expo attendees will be able to pre-order a copy of *Let Your Mind Run*, and receive a signed book plate at Deena's booth in the expo hall.

Two other very notable runners round out the Health & Fitness Expo clinic schedule: 1976 Olympic Marathon fourth-place finisher and author **Don Kardong**, and prolific marathon and ultra-marathon runner **Mike Wardian**, who set a world record for the fastest time for seven marathons run on seven different continents in seven consecutive days in January 2017 (average pace of 2:45:56). Kardong will speak at the expo at 4 p.m. on Friday, then again at 1 p.m. on Saturday, and will sign autographs for an hour following each of his talks. Wardian will speak at the expo at 11 a.m. on Saturday, and will sign autographs from noon-1 p.m.

Early commitments to the elite field of runners indicate that the combination of \$102,900 in prize money and bonuses, coupled with PRRO and RRCA Championship titles, may result in the deepest, most competitive field to toe the starting line of the Credit Union Cherry Blossom Ten Mile in years. The final pre-race press release, scheduled for Wednesday, April 4th, will provide a comprehensive look at the invited field.

The 2018 Credit Union Cherry Blossom Run will mark the 17th year of title sponsorship by Credit Union Miracle Day. Since 2002, over \$8 million has been raised for the Children's Miracle Network Hospitals.

About the Credit Union Cherry Blossom Ten Mile

The Credit Union Cherry Blossom, organized by Cherry Blossom, Inc., a 501c(3) chapter of the Road Runners Club of America, is known as "The Runner's Rite of Spring®" in the Nation's Capital. The staging area for the event is on the Washington Monument Grounds, and the course passes in sight of all of the major Washington, DC Memorials. The event serves as a fundraiser for the Children's Miracle Network Hospitals, a consortium of 170 premier children's hospitals across North America. About one-third of the funds raised support Washington, DC's own Children's National ("Children's Hospital"). The event also funds two \$5,000 Road Runners Club of America "Roads Scholar" grants designed to support up-and-coming U.S. distance running talent.

The event is a proud member of the **PRRO Circuit** (PRRO.org), a series of non-marathon prize money road races in Tampa, FL; Washington, DC; Spokane, WA; Utica, NY; and Pittsburgh, PA, with the 2018 PRRO Championships to be hosted by the Credit Union Cherry Blossom Ten Mile on April 8. The circuit is committed to a drug-free sport and funds Clearidium to conduct drug testing at all circuit events in compliance with the standards of international and U.S. drug testing authorities.

In addition to being sanctioned by **USA Track & Field** and the **Road Runners Club of America**, the Credit Union Cherry Blossom Run has earned Gold Level Inspire Certification from the **Council for**

Responsible Sport in recognition of its legacy of commitment to sustainability and thoughtful resource management. To learn more, visit www.CherryBlossom.org.

Credit Union Miracle Day, Inc., a consortium of credit unions and credit union suppliers in partnership with CUNA Mutual Group and PSCU, is the title sponsor of the Credit Union Cherry Blossom Ten Mile Run, 5K Run-Walk and Kids' Run. Hood Cottage Cheese is the presenting sponsor of the 5K Run-Walk. Supporting sponsors include E-Trade, Garmin, Gatorade, GEICO, Gold's Gym, Mamma Lucia, MedStar Sports Medicine, Navy Federal Credit Union, Old Ox Brewery, Potomac River Running, Suburban Solutions, and Under Armour.

About America's Credit Unions:

Credit unions provide consumers choices for financial services such as checking accounts, investments and loans of all kinds including mortgages. Funds are federally insured, but unlike banks, there are no stockholders at credit unions. Earnings are returned to member-owners in the form of lower loan rates, higher savings rates, low or no-fee products and services. The credit union philosophy of placing members' needs first is why more than 113 million Americans do their banking at one of America's 5,800 credit unions. Credit unions are for everyone - no matter where you live, there is a credit union to meet your needs.

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