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Former Olympian Craig Virgin to Start Battle XC 5

Bethesda, Maryland — Accomplished long distance runner, world cross country champion, and three-time Olympian, Craig Virgin will serve as the honorary starter and event ambassador for the American Running Association's 5th *Battle of the Potomac XC Championship*. The cross-country championship will be held November 20 at Smokey Glen Farm in Gaithersburg, Maryland. The unique State vs State cross country meet pits the best of Maryland, the District of Columbia, Virginia and West Virginia in a 5K race.

"We are fortunate to honor one of running's greats with Craig Virgin's appearance at our event," announces Dave Watt, American Running Association (ARA) executive director. "Craig can be an inspiration for today's high school runners and all of our youth," adds Watt. "His story and accomplishments still resonate today."

Virgin grew up in Belleville, Illinois, where he was a legend in Illinois high school track and cross-country circles. In fact, his two-mile high school record of 8:40:90 still stands as the fastest time ever recorded in a high school race of that distance. At the University of Illinois, Virgin won nine Big 10 Championships, an NCAA Championship, and qualified for the U.S. Olympic Team. He ran the 10,000 meters race at the 1976 and 1984 Olympics. The 1980 Olympics were boycotted yet he ran the 2nd fastest 10K ever 10 days prior to the beginning of the boycotted 1980 Games. He was also the 1976 NCAA Cross-Country Champion, a seven-time U.S. record-holder in road and track, and two-time winner of the I.A.A.F. World Cross-Country Championships.

Virgin's accomplishments at the I.A.A.F. World Cross-Country Championships are most noteworthy. In 1980, he became *the first and only American male to win the event*. He came back the next year and won it again. He is also past champion of numerous road races in the U.S. and was a runner-up at the Boston Marathon in one of the few times he ran the marathon.

Virgin's remarkable accomplishments were achieved despite being born with a congenital urologic disease which, in 1994, forced him to have his right kidney surgically removed. In 1997, only three years after his kidney was removed, Virgin was involved in a head-on car collision and sustained life-threatening injuries; however, after undergoing physical therapy and eight operations in two years, he returned to running. In 2001, he was inducted into the National Distance Hall of Fame in Utica, New York.

The 5th *Battle of the Potomac*, also known as *Battle XC5* or *XC Border War 5* will kick-off at 12:45 p.m. with the middle school boys and girls running a 2.5K race. This will be followed by the open and seeded 5K races. To view the complete schedule and event information, go to www.battlexc.com.

The Battle of the Potomac XC Championships is produced by the Bethesda, Maryland-based American Running Association (ARA). This championship meet, which involves four neighboring states, serves as a venue to encourage more kids to become interested in the sport of running and to become runners themselves. All proceeds from the meet help produce the event and support ARA's free youth walk-run training programs. ARA is a nonprofit organization founded in 1968 to promote healthy living and active lifestyles among all Americans. It is dedicated to supporting runners through education and specialized programs, as well as encouraging all individuals from children to adults to run and be fit. For more information about the association or to learn more about the walk-run programs, visit www.americanrunning.org.

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