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Media Contact: John Dakin
(970) 949-1999
jdakin@vfv.org

NORWEGIAN STARS AAMODT AND KJUS HEAD ALLSTAR CAST OF SKIING LEGENDS INTO 25TH ANNIVERSARY COUNTRYWIDE AMERICAN SKI CLASSIC

VAIL, Colorado—The stakes have most definitely been raised within the Legends field for the 2007 Countrywide American Ski Classic as the two most decorated Olympic and World Championship skiers in history join the festivities for the 25th anniversary celebration March 21-25.

Norwegian stars Kjetil Andre Aamodt and Lasse Kjus will make their rookie appearances for the silver anniversary competitions, which include the Countrywide Legends Giant Slalom, Volvo Legends Downhill and the Countrywide Ford Cup celebrity team races.

“We are very excited to be able to welcome Kjetil and Lasse to the 2007 Countrywide American Ski Classic,” offered Ceil Folz, president of the Vail Valley Foundation. “Not only are they some of the greatest names in ski racing history, but they have both provided the Vail Valley with many wonderful World Cup and World Championships memories over the years.”

Teammates and roommates for the better part of their illustrious careers, Aamodt and Kjus own a total of 36 Olympic and World Championship medals, 20 for Aamodt and 16 for Kjus, while the duo also accounted for a career total of three overall World Cup titles and 39 individual World Cup victories.

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Countrywide Ski Classic Legends Field

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Kjus still reigns supreme in terms of number of medals won in a single World Championships, earning five, two golds and three silvers, at the 1999 World Alpine Ski Championships in Vail and Beaver Creek, while Aamodt owns the distinction of being both the youngest and the oldest skier to ever win Olympic gold.

“The 1999 World Championships Super-G (Kjus tied with Austria’s Hermann Maier for the gold medal) was one of the most exciting ski races I’ve ever witnessed,” Folz continued. “For Lasse to go on to win medals in all five events was truly special.”

The Vail Valley has also been good to the Vikings from a World Cup standpoint as Aamodt captured the 1994 overall World Cup crown at the World Cup Finals in Vail, along with a World Championships Combined gold in 1999, while Kjus claimed a 2004 Birds of Prey World Cup Giant Slalom win in Beaver Creek to go along with his 1995 Super-G victory in Vail.

However, Aamodt and Kjus will have plenty of high-profile company at this year’s Countrywide American Ski Classic as the Norwegians will join an all-star field of Legends competitors from ten different nations.

Headline the women’s field will be 1998 Olympic Super-G champion Picabo Street, along with 1976 triple Olympic medalist Rosi Mittermaier-Neureuther of Germany, 1999 World Championships Slalom gold medalist Zali Steggall of Australia and 1998 World Cup Slalom champion Ylva Nowen of Sweden.

In addition to the Norwegians, the men’s Legends field will feature 1976 Olympic Downhill gold medalist Franz Klammer of Austria, as well as Americans Phil and Steve Mahre, 2001 World Alpine Ski Championships Downhill gold medalist Hannes Trinkl of Austria and the current head of Alpine Canada and original “Crazy Canuck” Ken Read.

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Countrywide Ski Classic Legends Field

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While Phil Mahre's attention will be focused squarely on the Legends competitions during the 2007 Countrywide American Ski Classic, the three-time World Cup overall champion will also be looking ahead as Mahre has come out of retirement in an effort to qualify for the 2008 U.S. National Championships. The native of Yakima, Washington has a chance to accelerate that goal by qualifying for the 2007 Nationals, which will be held the week following the Countrywide American Ski Classic in Alyeska, Alaska.

"Phil has always been a terrific supporter of the Legends event and he participates whenever possible," Folz concluded. "I've always said that if there was one Legend that could come out of retirement and still be competitive, it would be Phil Mahre and now we are lucky enough to see this become reality."

The Legends portion of the 2007 Countrywide American Ski Classic will get underway Wednesday evening, March 21, under the lights at Vail Mountain's Golden Peak with the Countrywide Legends Giant Slalom. Contested in a dual head-to-head format, the race will be held in conjunction with the special Bud Light Street Beat free concert, featuring rock icons Soul Asylum.

The Countrywide Legends Giant Slalom Qualifying will get underway at 4:45 p.m., with the first set of the Bud Light Street Beat free concert kicking off at 6 p.m. The Giant Slalom Finals for men and women will resume at 6:45 p.m., with Soul Asylum bringing down the curtain on the evening with their final set at 7:15 p.m.

The Volvo Legends Downhill will descend on Golden Peak Thursday, March 22, with the first run scheduled for an 11 a.m. start, while the second run is slated to get underway at approximately at noon. The race features a unique handicapping system that allows for racers from five different decades to compete on a level playing field.

In addition to the Countrywide Legends Giant Slalom and the Volvo Legends Downhill competitions, the Legends will also serve as team captains for the Countrywide Ford Cup celebrity team races on Friday and Saturday, March 23 and 24.

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Countrywide Ski Classic Legends Field

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The 2007 Countrywide American Ski Classic is a project of the Vail Valley Foundation. For additional information on the Countrywide American Ski Classic or the Vail Valley Foundation, visit www.vvf.org.