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Great American Ski Chase scurries into Traverse City

Traverse City, Michigan—

Get ready for one of northern Michigan's most exciting winter week when First of America Bank presents the 15th annual North American Vasa in Traverse City, Saturday, Feb. 9.

The Grand Traverse Resort is the official headquarters again this year. On race day, the official start/finish will be at Jellystone Park. Beginning at 7:30 a.m., racers, volunteers and

spectators will be bussed to and from the Grand Traverse Resort - only authorized vehicles will be allowed to park at Jellystone Park due to the limited parking available.

Attracting over 1,000 skiers from across the United States and Canada, the 1991 Vasa highlights include several new events for both citizen and factory team skiers of all ages.

Vasa events begin Thursday, Feb. 7 with a Candlelight 5-kilometer Ski at the Grand Traverse Resort Nordic Center located on M-72 at the Sandtrap restaurant. Bring the family and enjoy free skiing at the Grand Traverse Resort starting at 5:30 p.m.

Then on Friday, Feb. 8, the 200 block of Front Street in downtown Traverse City will be transformed into a spectacular winter ski carnival when the North American Vasa presents the second annual Vasa Sprints Races from 3 to 7 p.m.; a 1,000 yard race series with six categories of competition and \$3,000 worth of prizes. Opening ceremonies start at 3 p.m. with sprints races starting at 4 p.m.

An added attraction at the Sprints Races this year is the attendance of Bill Koch, an Olympian and World Cup Champion Cross Country Skier. Bill's coach, William Gaskel, will also be attending the Sprints Races to offer racing tips and techniques.

The North American Vasa, one of nine races in the Great American Ski Chase, consists of a 25-, a 47- and a 10-kilometer race with the start and finish located at Jellystone Park. The 50-kilometer race featuring elite skiers and factory team members starts at 9

a.m. Saturday followed by the 25-kilometer race at 10 a.m.

In addition to Vasa Race Day festivities is the 10-kilometer Fun Race. There are no age restrictions and whole families are encouraged to come and test their cross country skiing skills against the clock. "Everyone a Victor Over Themselves" is the motto for this fun race. Registration is \$5.

Packet pick up and final registration for the Vasa runs from noon to 11 p.m. on Friday, Feb. 8 at Grand Traverse Resort in the Tower Area (look for signs). A skier information meeting will be held in the same area at 9 p.m.

The Vasa will feature a food fair at the Resort again this year in The Grand Ball Room immediately following the race on Saturday from noon to 7 p.m. Restaurants and food vendors from around the Grand Traverse area will serve a variety of food, drink and spirits to skiers, spectators and Resort guests for a special price.

Then at 7 p.m. the Vasa and First of America Bank will host the race Awards Ceremony in the Grand Ballroom at the Grand Traverse Resort presenting plaques to skiers in numerous categories including the handicapped division.

The North American Vasa, presented by First of America Bank, is operated by a staff of 500 volunteers from the Grand Traverse Area. For registration information, contact the Vasa Office at 616-946-8272 or 1-800-869-8272 or write P.O. Box 581, Traverse City, MI 49685-0581.



ALL AGES, ALL SKILLS— The North American Vasa has Nordic tests for citizen and factory team skiers alike in distances ranging from 1000 yard sprints to 50 kilometers.

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