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9TH ANNUAL NATIONAL BLACK HERITAGE CHAMPIONSHIP SWIM MEET RETURNS TO THE TRIANGLE AQUATIC CENTER IN CARY FOR ITS THIRD YEAR IN THE TRIANGLE

Former American Record Holder Sabir Muhammad At The 9th Annual National Black Heritage Championship Swim Meet At The TAC In Cary

CARY, NC (May 18, 2011) – Former American Record Holder Sabir Muhammad will appear at the 9th Annual National Black Heritage Championship Swim Meet hosted by the North Carolina Aquablazers Swim Team, the Triangle Aquatic Center and the Greater Raleigh Convention and Visitors Bureau. More than 900 swimmers from across the country are expected to attend, creating an estimated economic impact of \$700,000 in direct visitor spending for the area.

The swim meet will be held at the Triangle Aquatic Center (TAC), on Memorial Day Weekend, Saturday May 28th – Sunday, May 29th, 2011, with 46 teams and more than 900 participants. Former American Record Sabir Muhammad will be signing autographs and hosting a Friday Night Swim Clinic at the TAC for the swim meet participants. Sabir Muhammad believes that every child must have the opportunity to learn to swim. For Muhammad swimming has been more than a sport, it has been a lifesaving skill and a passport to an extraordinary life.

Certainly, Sabir Muhammad treads uncharted waters. Muhammad spent his early years in metropolitan Atlanta in an area notorious for drug-abuse and crime. At the age of 7 he learned to swim at an inner city learn to swim program and he has since made history. Today, Muhammad is the most decorated African-American in the sport of swimming and advocates the importance of swimming in the lives of children.

In 1994, Muhammad accepted a full scholarship from Stanford University and became the first African-American to compete for the varsity men's team. His sophomore year Muhammad qualified for the 1995

Pan-Pacific Games held in Atlanta, becoming the first African-American to do so. In 1996, Muhammad competed in the Olympic Swimming Trials, qualifying for the consolation finals. In 1998, Muhammad led Stanford to its 17th straight Pac-10 championship and 8th NCAA Team Championship, clocking the fastest relay split ever in the 50 fly. Muhammad finished his collegiate career with 7 Pac-10 championship titles, 25 All-American honors and 3 NCAA, US Open and American Records. Muhammad graduated from Stanford as an Academic All-American with a degree in International Relations. Muhammad holds an MBA from Goizueta Business School at Emory University.

Shortly after his graduation Muhammad joined USA Swimming's National Resident Team at the US Olympic Training Center in Colorado Springs. While at the resident team Muhammad became the first recipient of the William E. Simon Olympic Endowment award and was once voted the USOC's "Athlete of the Month". Muhammad qualified for the 1999 Pan-American Games, held in Winnipeg, Canada, becoming the first African-American to co-captain a USA international swimming team.

In the summer of 1999, Muhammad joined Team Baywatch Hawaii and guest starred in an episode of the television show entitled "The Last Rescue". In 2000, he competed in the Short Course World Championships held in Athens, Greece winning both silver and bronze medals. At those world championships, Muhammad became the first African-American to win a medal at a major international swimming competition.

Later in 2000, Muhammad competed as a championship finalist at the 2000 Olympic Trials in the 100 meter freestyle and as a semi-finalist in the 50 meter freestyle. In 2001, Muhammad took some time out of the pool. Shortly thereafter, Muhammad started work as a marketing associate for one of the world's leading money managers.

During that time he was featured in the 2001 Sports Illustrated Men's Swim Suit Edition alongside notables such as Jason Taylor of the Miami Dolphins. That summer Muhammad competed at the US Summer Nationals and qualified for the championship finals. Later that year through a joint effort with the Boys and Girls Clubs of Metropolitan Atlanta, Muhammad launched Swim for Life! an initiative aimed at teaching metropolitan Atlanta's youth to swim.

Sabir Muhammad is an exciting athlete that delivers the sport of swimming to a nascent and diverse audience. He has broken a total 10 American Records in his career. He is a two time Short Course World Championship medalist, a four-time US Open champion, a five-time World Cup Swimming champion and a two-time runner-up at US Nationals. He has been featured by media such as the Today Show, NBC Sports, Fox Sports, Sports Illustrated, Essence Magazine, Splash Magazine, Swimming World Magazine, The New York Times, The Washington Post, The Atlanta Journal and Constitution, and many other international and regional papers.

The Third Annual Community Breakfast Honoring Minority Swimming Pioneers will be held in conjunction with the swim meet on Friday, May 27, 2011, from 9-11 am. The breakfast is open to the general public and sponsorship and ticket information can be found on the Meet Information page of the meet website at <http://blackheritageswimming.org>.

The National Black Heritage Championship Swim Meet is not your typical North Carolina swim meet since most of the teams will be traveling from 12 states and Washington, DC, mostly from the eastern U.S. and the Midwest. It's more of a family reunion, than just a swim meet, where mothers, fathers, siblings, grandparents, and other relatives attend with their 900 swimmers and coaches. In addition to swimming, the swimmers and their families, the coaches and the chaperones have a party at the Marbles Kids Museum in downtown Raleigh on Saturday night with plenty of fun for all ages!

This marks the third year that the meet is being held at the Triangle Aquatics Center. It complements TAC's partnership with USA Swimming's "Make a Splash Program" and their efforts to improve minority swim statistics and reducing drowning deaths nationwide. The Greater Raleigh Convention and Visitors Bureau (GRCVB), which coordinated the local bid effort that secured the meet, will serve as a host

partner. In that capacity, GRCVB will work closely with both the Aquablazers and TAC while focusing on visitor services, hospitality, accommodations and marketing.

The Black Heritage Meet will provide a boost to the local economy on Memorial Day Weekend, a time when most Triangle Area residents head to the beach. It's a weekend filled with fast swimming, great food and fun for all. This meet is a marquee event on the area's sports calendar. The economic impact is estimated at \$700,000 in direct visitor spending.

The Black Heritage Meet also serves a purpose. Minorities are nearly three times as likely to drown as their Caucasian counterparts. TAC is working to combat this sad statistic and has partnered with USA Swimming's "Make A Splash" learn to swim initiative. Through "Make A Splash", TAC is able to offer free or reduced swim lessons to many eligible children in our community. Thanks in part to a grant from Blue Cross and Blue Shield and the Cary Community Foundation, classes have been formed and TAC is accepting registrations for group learn to swim classes for minority school-aged children, ages 5-18. Doracy Harrison, TAC Program Manager, will be working with area schools, churches, youth groups and the North Carolina Aquablazers Swim Team to register eligible children and ensure that these children are given every opportunity to learn to be safe in, on and around the water. By participating in the National Black Heritage Championship Swim Meet, these new swimmers will also get the opportunity to experience the competitive side of swimming as well.

The Triangle Aquatic Center (TAC) is a nonprofit organization with a mission to build and operate public aquatic facilities throughout the Triangle. TAC's first aquatic facility, at 275 Convention Drive, includes a 50 meter competition pool, a 25-yd training pool and a warm water instructional pool. The TAC facility is 72,000 sq. feet and has comfortable spectator seating capacity for 1000 people. The TAC facility has a full-service café and an All-American Swim Shop on site. The TAC facility is conveniently located off Interstate 40 at Exit 291 and is adjacent to Cary's largest shopping mall, Cary Towne Center.

The North Carolina Aquablazers Swim Team is a small group of diverse swimmers from North Carolina, South Carolina, Florida, Georgia, California, Pennsylvania and Tennessee, who, along with their parents, want to inspire more minorities to learn to swim and join the competitive swimming ranks. They formed the National Black Heritage Swimming Foundation in December 2009 to further their goals. One of their initial efforts has been to support the Garner Road Community Center and Brittany Copeland's Jump In® program to provide free swim lessons to minority children during the winter months each year.

For more details contact the Meet Director, Kathy Cooper at (919) 522-9275 or kcfromnc@mindspring.com, and visit all of our websites – <http://blackheritageswimming.org>, www.triangleaquatics.org and www.visitraleigh.com.

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