

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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CHARLOTTE – In addition to a title sponsor, center city's inaugural professional bicycle race has secured Roger Staubach, former football star and owner of a national real estate firm, to speak at the event's kickoff banquet.

The commitment of Staubach, a Heisman Trophy winner and Super Bowl most valuable player, highlights a list of accomplishments by race organizers.

The Bank of America Invitational Criterium, as the race will be known, has signed Bank of America as its title sponsor. It also has a new date and has settled on an uptown course for its 50-mile competition, organizers said today. Further, the race has brought into its fold Charlotte's best-known amateur bicycling event.

Meanwhile, the list of sponsors is growing, organizers said, and a Web address, www.charlottecriterium.org, went live this week. The event's e-mail address is info@Charlottecriterium.org.

Graham Denton, Atlantic Regional Executive for Bank of America, said he is excited about a top-level bicycle race for Charlotte. "I am proud to have these elite athletes competing in the Carolinas," said the Charlotte-based executive.

"We're extremely grateful to Graham Denton, Chief Marketing Executive Cathy Bessant, and the Bank of America marketing team for stepping up with the title sponsorship funding, said Jim Palermo, an executive vice president at Bank of America who is co-leader of the race effort. "Funding is vital for this event that directly funnels money into research and treatment for victims of brain tumors."

Organizers hope to raise more than \$1 million for the newly created Brain Tumor Fund for the Carolinas (BTFC). Palermo, whose son is a brain tumor survivor, leads the group with Dr. Tony Asher, director of the Brain Tumor Program at Carolinas Medical Center.

"We're pedaling toward a big success for our first race, now scheduled for August 7, 2004," Palermo said. The Bank of America Invitational Criterium, initially planned for June, will highlight 10 days of bicycle race-related activities.

"August worked better for the U.S. Cycling Federation," Palermo said, "and we want to hold our race when the largest number of top-level riders can be here to compete."

The USCF has sanctioned the Charlotte race as part of its official schedule, Palermo added.

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The best bicycle racers from across the nation and around the world will compete in the Bank of America Invitational Criterium. Much of the 1.3-mile course stretches along Tryon Street. Competition will begin in twilight and finish under the stars. The total purse is anticipated to be greater than \$125,000.

For area recreational cyclers, the Charlotte event has incorporated into its 10-day schedule the "24 Hours of Booty" ride started in 2002 by Charlotte attorney Spencer Lueders. The 'round-the-clock endurance ride has benefited the Lance Armstrong Foundation, which also fights cancer. It will be held the weekend of July 31 and Lueders said he is glad to fold his ride into festivities surrounding the Bank of America Invitational Criterium.

Alston & Bird LLP, Lueders' law firm, purchased the first table for the July 29 BTFC banquet that Staubach's address will highlight. Staubach starred at the U.S. Naval Academy and with the Dallas Cowboys of the National Football League.

Today, Staubach is chairman and chief executive of The Staubach Company, a real estate firm that provides property location services worldwide and maintains a Charlotte office in the center city. The company has about 1,200 employees and reported \$220 million in sales for fiscal year 2002.

The Bank of America Invitational Criterium will be an annual event, Palermo said, and organizers anticipate it will raise \$5 million for the BTFC in its first three years. The group will split proceeds between tumor research, treatment technology and family/patient support services.

BTFC co-leader Asher said a large portion of the monies raised will remain in Charlotte. The BTFC will funnel funds to the Carolinas Medical Center Brain Tumor Program and to the Buddy Kemp Caring House, named for a former Bank of America executive who died of a brain tumor.

Some funds will be allotted to the Lance Armstrong Foundation. Armstrong is the American bike racer who survived testicular cancer which spread to his brain and lungs. He won his fifth Tour de France this summer.

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