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RUNNERS REUNITED XVI
ALASKA'S DISTANCE LEGEND, DON CLARY
COMES DOWN TO REUNITE WITH THE TRIO OF CALIFORNIAN'S
ASSEMBLING THE WINNING JUNIOR MENS SQUAD
FROM THE 1975
WORLD CROSS COUNTRY CHAMPIONSHIPS

*Event's 16th Outing Welcomes
Alaska's first Olympic Runner, Don Clary
Rounding Out the Entire Victorious Quartet which won the
IAAF World Cross Country Championships Junior Men's
Team Crown held in Rabat, Morocco.*

FULLERTON, Calif. (JULY 13, 2024) – Alaska's distance legend, **DON CLARY**, starred at East High School in Anchorage, Alaska Class of '75, Alaska's first Track & Field Olympian (1984), made his way from Anchorage, Alaska to be at Orange County hotspot Callahan's Pub & Grill here Sat. July 13 for the sixteenth edition of Runners Reunited (RRU XVI). Clary was reunited with his fellow '75 World Junior Championship teammates; individual winner **BOBBY THOMAS** (Glendale, '74), **ROY KISSIN** (San Ramon Valley, '75) and RRU founder and Loara High School Class of '75 star 2-miler **RALPH SERNA**, together with several dozen California high school elite runners from the 1950s thru 2000s.

Symbolizing running in the state of Alaska, Clary was a standout in cross country and track & Field. While at East High, he won two state cross country titles. Launching his remarkable prep campaign as a sophomore, Clary was best known for his impressive two-mile run (9:04.4), a state record, which prevailed for 45 years! As a senior, Clary's first international success came at the IAAF World Cross Country Championships where his fifth-place finish was integral for the American juniors to claim the team title, over the 7-kilometer Souissi Racecourse. Alongside Clary, was Kissin (8th), Serna (15th) and individual winner Thomas. The U.S. squad won over an Ireland team led by, future Irish Olympian, **JOHN TREACY** (St. Anne's Post Primary School, Cappoquin, County Waterford, Ireland, '74). In the race, there were 60 athletes from 11 nations participating in that, third edition of the, World Cross Country event.

Don Clary attended the University of Oregon. Clary would make an impact as a freshman. In a dual track meet, in April, against fellow distance power Washington State. In the 5,000-meter race, Clary was in last place and with about 500 meters to go, the Oregon frosh surprised everyone by overtaking the field during the last lap to defeat Cougars senior **JOHN NGENO** (Kenya), the reigning NCAA champ in the 3 and 6-mile events, by four seconds. Clary sped to a then personal-best of 13:45 which drew national attention. Clary was 4-time All-American at University of Oregon, Inducted in University of Oregon Hall of Fame (1998) and a 4-time Olympic trials qualifier (1976, 1980, 1984, 1988). It was in 1984, when his third-place 5,000m finish, in the U.S. Olympic trials, made Clary Alaska's first Olympic runner by racing at the Summer Games in Los Angeles.

Don caught up with two former Oregon teammates, national high school record holder in the 2-mile from 1979-2008 (8:36.3) **JEFF NELSON** (Burbank '79) & organizer **DAN MARTINEZ** (Newark '78).

That '75 Championship team was joined by another world champion; 1974 world junior (19 and under) cross country winner **RICH KIMBALL** (De La Salle, Concord, '74) whose distinction got his picture on the May 1974 cover of Runner's World. Kimball was also gifted with photos of his superb 4:02.7 from the San Jose Invitational.

Also making an appearance was Golden State 2-mile champion **PETE ROMERO** (Reedley, '67) and subject of a Sports Illustrated article, 6/26/67. Pete was gifted with said vintage '67 Sports Illustrated issue!

For his coaching, **RON ALLICE**, was awarded with the celebratory RRU Legacy ring. Also receiving a RRU Legacy ring, for running, was **JAQI HANSEN**, Granada Hills, Class of '66.

“Quite an experience to reconnect after 49 years with my teammates on the 1975 Junior National x-country running team,” said Don Clary

“Making that team was a big breakthrough for me, and then for the four of us to do so well individually and as a team, what can I say the whole experience was a running career and life high point, and it's great to have an opportunity to reconnect and revisit those memories of 49 years ago,” stated Roy Kissin.

Bobby Thomas remarked, "I wish to thank the guys at RRU for inviting the 1975 Junior World Championship Team to their reunion. It's so great reliving memories and good times. This is the first time we have all been together in one place since 1975. Don Clary, Roy Kissin, and Ralph Serna are real world champions. Winning the Junior World XC race was a life time experience for me, a dream come true. Thanks for honoring us., a dream come true. Thanks for honoring us.

Longtime Anaheim resident, Ralph Serna concluded by saying, "Each year I'm amazed by the list of attendees and pleased to see the entire 1975 World Junior XC champ and championship team back together again after 49 years!! Always a fun time at RRU."

The event sported 145 attendees, according to RRU founder Serna, and was one of the most successful editions since he and organizer Martinez began staging the now-annual gathering for the state's elite prep runners in 2007.

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