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Past Chicago Champions and Running Legends Steve Jones, Joan Benoit Samuelson, Constantina Dita and Deena Kastor Return to Chicago to Celebrate Inaugural International Chicago 5K

CHICAGO – The Bank of America Chicago Marathon announced today that past champions and legendary runners Steve Jones, Joan Benoit Samuelson, Constantina Dita and Deena Kastor will return to Chicago to be part of the excitement of race weekend and celebrate the inaugural International Chicago 5K on Saturday, October 8.

“Steve, Joan, Constantina and Deena are global running icons who have inspired a generation of runners,” said Carey Pinkowski, Bank of America Chicago Marathon executive race director. “I watched all of these athletes run bravely and become champions on our city streets. It is an honor to welcome them back to Chicago to celebrate our city’s cultural diversity with the International Chicago 5K.”

The International Chicago 5K was born out of a desire to celebrate both Chicago’s international zest and the allure of running in a world-class city. The Bank of America Chicago Marathon annually welcomes more than 10,000 runners from over 100 countries. While the Chicago Marathon is widely recognized on the global stage for its international competition and distinct course that winds through 29 culturally diverse neighborhoods, the city of Chicago is a global gateway and international hub for business and tourism. Chicago is home to the largest and most active sister cities organization in the United States, having established official relationships with 28 cities in almost every region in the world.

Throughout its storied history, the Chicago Marathon, acclaimed as one of the fastest marathons in the world, has witnessed four world records, multiple epic duels down the homestretch, and some of the sport’s greatest legends take its crown. Steve Jones, renowned as the British athlete who took marathon running to a new level, arrived in Chicago in 1984 to break the marathon world record. Despite cold temperatures and a steady rain downpour, Jones moved to the front of the field and never looked back. He stopped the clock in 2:08:05. He returned in 1985 to take the men’s field out in 4:43 pace, reaching the halfway mark in 1:01:42, something considered disrespectful to the

distance in the mid-1980s. Jones held on to win in 2:07:13 – missing the world record by one second.

Like Jones, American Joan Benoit Samuelson, one of the most accomplished runners in the history of the sport, won the 1985 Chicago Marathon. She faced one of the most competitive women's fields in event history, including world record-holder Ingrid Kristiansen of Norway and defending Chicago Marathon champion Rosa Mota of Portugal. Benoit Samuelson outran her competitors, setting an American and course record of 2:21:21, and missing the world record by just 15 seconds. Benoit Samuelson's American record stood until 2003, when Deena Kastor finally broke it.

Constantina Dita, a Romanian running legend, made her Chicago Marathon debut in 2003, finishing second in 2:23:35. She returned in 2004 in the women's elite field, dominating the chase pack from start to finish to win in 2:23:45. She came back to defend her title in 2005, but in spite of a hard charge toward the finish line, she failed to catch American running icon Deena Kastor. Dita, then the 2005 World Championship bronze medalist in the marathon, clocked 2:21:30, a personal best and a still-standing national record.

Deena Kastor took command of Chicago streets in 2005 when she defeated defending champion Dita. In spite of a 40-second lead with seven miles remaining, she almost lost the race. As her body faltered from the fast pace, Dita barreled down Columbus Drive – coming within strides of catching her competitor. Kastor won by five seconds – missing the American record by only four seconds. At the 2006 Virgin Money London Marathon, she became the first (and only) American woman to break the 2:20 barrier en route to her American record victory in 2:19:36. Kastor returned to Chicago last fall to commemorate the 10-year anniversary of her win; she did it by breaking Colleen De Reuck's American masters record by 53 seconds, running 2:27:47.

About the Bank of America Chicago Marathon

In its 39th year, the Bank of America Chicago Marathon welcomes thousands of runners from more than 100 countries and all 50 states, including a world-class elite field, top regional and masters runners, race veterans, debut marathoners and charity runners. The race's iconic course takes runners through 29 vibrant neighborhoods on an architectural and cultural tour of Chicago. In 2015, an estimated 1.7 million spectators lined the streets, cheering on 37,459 runners from the start line to the final stretch down Columbus Drive. As a result of the race's national and international draw, the Chicago Marathon assists in raising millions of dollars for a variety of charitable causes while generating \$254 million in annual economic impact to its host city. The 2016 Bank of America Chicago Marathon, a member of the Abbott World Marathon Majors, will start and finish in Grant Park beginning at 7:30 a.m. on Sunday, October 9. In advance of the race, a two-day Abbott Health & Fitness Expo will be held at McCormick Place Convention Center on Friday, October 7, and Saturday, October 8. For more information about the event and how to get involved, go to chicagomarathon.com.

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