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2012 Chicago Champion and Current Half Marathon World Record-holder
Headline 2015 Bank of America Chicago Marathon Elite Field
International Elites Attempt to Qualify for National Olympic Teams

CHICAGO – Today, the Bank of America Chicago Marathon announced 2012 champion Tsegaye Kebede of Ethiopia and current half marathon world record-holder Florence Kiplagat of Kenya will return to compete for the crown at the 38th annual event.

Kebede and Kiplagat accent an international elite field that represents the global road to Rio de Janeiro. Many athletes hope to use the 2015 Chicago Marathon as a springboard (via qualifying times and notable performances) to representing their countries at the Rio de Janeiro 2016 Olympic Games.

Chicago marks the site of Kebede's 2012 marathon personal best (2:04:38) and his sole victory in three attempts down the homestretch on Columbus Drive. His 2010 epic, head-to-head battle against the late Sammy Wanjiru is considered by many to be one of the most courageous marathon duels of all time.

On the women's side, Kenya's Florence Kiplagat comes back to Chicago after finishing in 2:25:57 last year. Kiplagat has something no other woman in the field has: the half marathon world record. The 2010 IAAF World Half Marathon champion and the 2011 and 2013 Berlin Marathon champion broke her own half marathon world record in February, clocking a remarkable 1:05:09 in Barcelona (she also set the 15K and 20K world records en route). Kiplagat ran her personal best in 2011, 2:19:44.

"These athletes have the ability to test themselves and chase their goals on race day," said Bank of America Chicago Marathon Executive Race Director Carey Pinkowski. "The streets of Chicago will see some incredible talent and competition as these men and women show off their Olympic-level talent."

October 11 will be the first time under Pinkowski's 26-year leadership that the race will not feature elite pacesetters. This change has the potential to produce more Olympic-like race conditions and a more strategic, tactical competition for runners. But with time bonuses still intact, a record-chasing speed show is not an artifact of the past.

Men's field:

Kebede, a 2008 Olympic Marathon bronze medalist, is one of the most accomplished and consistent marathon runners of the last decade. He will arrive in Chicago as a major presence on the AWMM race circuit, finishing in the top 10 of 15 AWMM races since 2009, including three victories, three second-place and five third-place finishes. After being left off of the 2012 Ethiopian Olympic team, a win in Chicago could catch the eye of his national federation and help him earn a spot in Rio.

Kenya's Sammy Kitwara stands out as Kebede's main contender. As the fifth-fastest man in history over the half marathon distance, Kitwara will toe the line in the windy city for the fourth time after steadily rising in the ranks over the past three years. He finished fourth in 2012, third in 2013 and second in 2014. He set a new personal best last year in Chicago, 2:04:28, making him the fastest man in this year's elite field.

Kebede and Kitwara will be joined by Kenyan elites Dickson Chumba (2:04:32), Wesley Korir (2:06:13), Lucas Rotich (2:07:17) and Sammy Ndungu (2:07:04).

Chumba was a relative unknown until he burst onto the scene in 2014 with a win and course record at the Tokyo Marathon. He followed that performance with a third-place showing at the 2014 Chicago Marathon in a new personal best, 2:04:32.

Wesley Korir, an elected member of the Kenyan Parliament, will make his seventh appearance in Chicago, the most of any elite athletes in the field. Career highlights include his second-place finish at the 2011 Chicago Marathon, followed by his victory in Boston in 2012 and his fifth-place finish and personal best, 2:06:13, in Chicago in 2012.

Ethiopia's Endeshaw Negesse (2:04:52) has a lot at stake in his Chicago Marathon debut. As the 2015 winner of the Tokyo Marathon, he is in the running for the AWMM series title. He needs to score in Chicago to have a chance at the \$500,000 prize. Also in the hunt from Ethiopia are Tilahun Regassa and Abera Kuma. Regassa, who placed second at the 2015 Xiamen Marathon and fifth at the 2015 London Marathon, made his marathon debut in Chicago in 2012 in a time that remains his personal best, 2:05:27. Kuma won the Rotterdam Marathon in April, and he holds a personal record of 2:05:56.

Yoshii Satoshi leads a strong contingent of Japanese runners. He has a personal best of 2:10:45. Australia's Liam Adams, Canada's Rob Watson and Great Britain's Mitch Goose round out the international field. Adams ran his 2:13:49 personal best in 2014, and Watson clocked a 2:13:29 in 2013. Goose will be making his 26.2-mile debut following a successful collegiate career at Iona College.

Fernando Cabada, of Fresno, Calif., will make his first Chicago appearance as the top American in the field. He set his personal best, 2:11:36, last year in Berlin. Sean Keveren, of Charlottesville, Va., will be making his marathon debut after posting an impressive 1:02:52 half marathon at the 2015 U.S. Half Marathon Championships in Houston.

Women's field:

Several women in the field boast the potential to make the 38th annual event a thrilling contest of strength, endurance and speed.

Mulu Seboka of Ethiopia enters Chicago, challenging Kiplagat and seeking her first AWMM career win. She launched her professional running career 12 years ago with a modest 2:46:33. Over the past decade, she has run more than thirty-five marathons – unprecedented for an elite marathoner – and she welcomed the new year with a personal record in Dubai, 2:21:56.

In addition to Seboka and Kiplagat, Ethiopia's Amane Gobena hopes to be among the leaders down the homestretch. She arrives fresh off a personal best and a second-place finish at the 2015 Paris Marathon in 2:23:30.

Hoping to prevent an East African sweep, Kayoko Fukushi of Japan is a three-time Olympian (Athens, Beijing, London) and a former world record-holder in the 15K. She finished second in the 2011 Chicago Marathon, and with a marathon personal best of 2:24:21 and a half marathon personal record of 1:07:26, she has the speed necessary for a podium finish.

Highlighting an internationally diverse field is Ireland's Fionnuala Britton. Britton represented Ireland at the 2008 Beijing Olympics (steeplechase) and 2012 London Olympics (5,000m, 10,000m) and she has set her sights on chasing an Olympic qualifying time in the marathon. She made her 26.2-mile debut in 2014 (2:31:46). The United Kingdom's Susan Partridge (2:30:46) also comes to Chicago in an attempt to qualify for Rio.

Two more international sensations have the potential to mix it up among the top 10: Burundi Olympian Diane Nukuri (2:27:50) and Denmark's Jessica Draskau Petersson (2:30:53).

On the U.S. side, 2005 Chicago Marathon champion, Olympian and American record-holder Deena Kastor (Mammoth Lakes, Calif.) will attempt to break Colleen De Reuck's American masters record of 2:28:40, set in 2005 in Chicago. Kastor had an impressive 2014 where she set five masters world records en route to her half marathon masters world record (1:09:37). Kastor is an Olympic Marathon bronze medalist (Athens) and the only U.S. woman in history to break the 2:20 barrier.

Alongside Kastor, Blake Russell (Pacific Grove, Calif.) stands out among a deep field of American contenders. Russell, a 2008 Olympian and 2:29:10 marathoner, announced her comeback with a win at the 2015 USATF National Marathon Championships.

Lindsey Scherf (Chapel Hill, N.C.) returns to Chicago after posting a 2:32:19 personal best at Grandma's Marathon in June. She ran the sixth-fastest marathon time by an

American woman in 2015. Sarah Crouch (Blowing Rock, N.C.) also returns after experiencing a huge breakthrough in Chicago in 2014, subtracting 12 minutes from her personal record to finish in the top 10 in 2:32:44.

Sara Hall (Flagstaff, Ariz.) made her highly anticipated marathon debut at the 2015 Los Angeles Marathon, finishing in a disappointing 2:48:02. She rebounded two weeks later at the IAAF World Cross Country Championships with a 20th place finish. Hall posted a 1:10:49 half marathon this summer, indicating she is ready for redemption in Chicago.

Tera Moody (Chicago, Ill.) will be seeking the Olympic Trials “A” standard after not racing the marathon distance since 2013. A veteran of five Chicago Marathons, Moody knows the course well; she set her personal best, 2:30:53, in Chicago in 2010.

For more information and elite athlete quotes, visit chicagomarathon.com/2015elites.

About the Bank of America Chicago Marathon

In its 38th 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 2014, an estimated 1.7 million spectators lined the streets cheering on a record, 40,659 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 2015 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 11. In advance of the race, a two-day Abbott Health & Fitness Expo will be held at McCormick Place Convention Center on Friday, October 9, and Saturday, October 10. For more information about the event and how to get involved, go to chicagomarathon.com.

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