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Five Past Champions Including World Record-Holders Headline 2016 Bank of America Chicago Marathon Elite Field

Dickson Chumba, Dennis Kimetto and Tsegaye Kebede Lead the Men's Field; Florence Kiplagat and Atsede Baysa Highlight the Women's Field

CHICAGO – Today, the Bank of America Chicago Marathon announced that current marathon world record-holder and 2013 Chicago Marathon champion and course record-holder Dennis Kimetto (KEN) and half-marathon world record-holder and 2015 Chicago Marathon champion Florence Kiplagat (KEN) will return to compete for the crown at the 39th annual event.

Kimetto and Kiplagat stand out in an historic field that includes five past champions – the most returning champions to toe the line in the same race in event history, setting the stage for October 9 to be a thrilling contest of experience, endurance and speed.

“Dickson, Tsegaye and Atsede have run their fastest career marathons in Chicago, and both Tsegaye and Dennis have experienced the thrill of breaking our course record,” said Carey Pinkowski, Bank of America Chicago Marathon executive race director. “To have so many past champions in one competition is thrilling. And there is depth on the American side as well; without pacesetters, we could see a new champion emerge from this talented field.”

Chicago marks the site of Kimetto’s North American and Bank of America Chicago Marathon course record of 2:03:45. He became the first runner in history to cover each 5K segment in under 14:50. He stunned in his 26.2-mile debut at the 2012 Berlin Marathon, finishing second in a debut record, 2:04:16. He then made history at the 2014 Berlin Marathon; he became the first person to run under two hours and three minutes, crossing the finish line in 2:02:57 to set a new world record.

Florence Kiplagat, the current world record-holder in the half-marathon (1:05:09), returns to Chicago to defend her 2015 title. Kiplagat showed poise last year as the women’s lead pack started aggressively on a 2:19 pace. She tucked herself in with the group and then made her final move with less than two miles to go, capturing her first Chicago Marathon victory in 2:23:33. Kiplagat is the 2010 IAAF World Half Marathon

champion and the 2011 and 2013 Berlin Marathon champion. She set her personal record (PR) of 2:19:44 in Berlin in 2011.

Men's field

Kimetto's run from the start line in Grant Park to the finish line down Columbus Drive will be contested by 2015 defending champion Dickson Chumba (KEN), 2012 champion Tsegaye Kebede (ETH), 2008 Olympic 10,000m bronze medalist Micah Kogo (KEN), and debut marathoner and 8K world record-holder Stephen Sambu (KEN). In spite of his world record in 2014, Kimetto has struggled to get back on top of the podium, making the 2016 Bank of America Chicago Marathon anything but a one-man show.

Chumba took home his third career victory at the 2015 Bank of America Chicago Marathon, breaking the lead pack with three miles to go after a slow and tactical race (the first race in more than two decades without pacesetters). By mile 24, Chumba had opened a 20-second gap on the chase pack, a gap that proved insurmountable in the end. Chumba started his marathon career in 2010, but he gained global recognition 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 his current PR (2:04:32).

Kebede's last run in Chicago four years ago resulted in a PR and a course record (later broken by Kimetto) of 2:04:38, but he is also remembered for his 2010 runner-up finish in an epic, head-to-head battle against the late Sammy Wanjiru (KEN). Kebede and Wanjiru jockeyed back and forth over the final miles of the race in what is considered one of the most courageous marathon duels of all time. Kebede, a 2008 Olympic Marathon bronze medalist and the 2012–2013 Abbott World Marathon Majors (AWMM) series winner, is one of the most accomplished marathon runners of the last decade. He has finished in the top 10 of 15 AWMM races since 2009, including three victories, three runner-up finishes and five third-place finishes.

Kogo might not have a marathon victory on his resume, but he does have an Olympic bronze medal in the 10,000m and a track PR of 26:35:63, making him the sixth-fastest man in history at the distance. Kogo set his PR in Chicago in the same race that Kimetto ran away from the field, clocking 2:06:56 for fourth place. While Kogo has a well-established career on the track, a major marathon championship continues to elude him. He arrives in Chicago eager to rewrite that storyline.

Sambu adds some mystery to a lead pack full of marathon credentials. While he has raced exceptionally well in Chicago – netting a pair of victories at the 2015 and 2016 Bank of America Shamrock Shuffle 8K – his potential in the marathon remains unknown. Sambu brings world record 8K speed (22:01:1), 10,000m speed (26:54:61) and half-marathon endurance (1:00:41) into his marathon debut.

Kenya's Gideon Kipketer and America's Luke Puskedra (Eugene, Ore.) plan to be in the hunt for a podium finish. Kipketer started 2016 by grabbing the headlines at the Mumbai

Marathon. Initially signed on to pace the race, he felt good at 30K and kept going – a decision that resulted in his first career victory. Kipketer ran his PR (2:08:14) at the 2012 Amsterdam Marathon. Puskedra stole the show at last year's Chicago Marathon, subtracting five minutes from his PR to run 2:10:24, becoming just the sixth American over the last two decades to score a top-five finish in Chicago. The 6'4" Puskedra clocked the fastest U.S. marathon time in 2015.

Koji Gokaya leads a strong contingent of Japanese runners with a personal best of 2:09:21. Takuya Fukatsu (2:09:31), Kazuya Ishida (2:11:57), and Ryoichi Matsuo (2:12:11) join Gokaya in a quest for a top finish.

Nick Arciniaga (Flagstaff, Ariz.), Tim Young (Fredericksburg, Va.), and Diego Estrada (Flagstaff, Ariz.) round out a strong American presence. From 2008 through 2014, Arciniaga ranked in the top 10 of the U.S. marathon runners, and he won the 2013 U.S. Marathon Championships. He enters with a 2:11:30 PR. Young set his PR at the 2014 Chicago Marathon (2:14:40), and Estrada, one of the fastest half-marathon runners in U.S. history (1:00:51), toes the line, seeking redemption from a tough debut and DNF at the 2016 U.S. Olympic Marathon Trials.

Women's field

Atsede Baysa (ETH), Valentine Kipketer (KEN), and AWMM newcomer Gulume Chala (ETH) plan to make it difficult for Kiplagat to defend her title.

Baysa – lining up in Chicago for the fourth time – stands out as Florence Kiplagat's main challenger. Baysa has more Chicago victories on her resume than her Kenyan rival (2010 and 2012), and she is the reigning Boston Marathon champion. She is one of the most prolific and consistent runners in the world of elite distance running, finishing in the top four of six AWMM and taking the crown at the Paris (twice), Istanbul, Xiamen and Saitama Marathons. Baysa made a statement in Chicago in 2012 when she beat her opponent to the line by one second in an all-out sprint finish down Columbus Drive, running a PR in 2:22:03. With the momentum of Boston still in her stride and the AWMM championship in view (she is in second place), she enters Chicago with the opportunity to make history if she wins a third time, becoming the only woman on record in Chicago Marathon history to complete the triple.

Kipketer, making her Bank of America Chicago Marathon debut, looked ripe for a podium finish with four miles to go at the 2016 Boston Marathon. She was part of the leading trio that crested the infamous Newton Hills late in the race; without a contender in sight, she seemed like a lock for a top-three finish. But a hard-charging Baysa, in one of the most dominant come-from-behind victories in history, took down the trio at mile 24 to capture the laurel wreath. Kipketer faded to fifth, but it was a strong showing for the 23-year-old. Kipketer, who started her career in 2008 as a junior competitor, took a maternity break and just recently returned to the roads in 2015. With a marathon PR of 2:23:02 and two previous victories in Amsterdam and Mumbai, she should be a factor for a top finish.

Chala, making her first appearance in an AWMM event, has only been competing at the 42K distance for four years, but she has run 12 marathons within that timeframe. She recorded her personal best and her second career victory in 2015 at the Frankfurt Marathon, stopping the clock in 2:23:12. Her time in Frankfurt was a six-minute PR and a bold statement that she is ready to compete among the best athletes on the global stage.

Hoping to prevent an East African sweep, American Serena Burla (Stafford, Va.) is a two-time U.S. Olympic Marathon trials qualifier (2012, 2016) with a personal best of 2:28:01. Burla has dipped under 2:30 twice in her career, and she was the 2014 U.S. Half Marathon champion. Burla turned in one of the most impressive U.S. marathon performances in 2015 when she finished 10th at the IAAF World Championships Marathon in Beijing.

Joining Burla on the U.S. side is six-time Chicago Marathon veteran Tera Moody (Chicago, Ill.). Moody made a comeback at the 2015 Chicago Marathon after struggling with injuries for two years. She ran her PR in the windy city in 2010 (2:30:53). Alongside Moody, Sarah Crouch (Blowing Rock, N.C.) returns for the third time. She experienced a huge breakthrough in Chicago in 2014, subtracting 12 minutes from her PR to finish in the top 10 in 2:32:44.

Highlighting an internationally diverse field is two-time Danish Olympian Jessica Draskau Petersson, 2016 Polish national champion Agnieszka Mierzejewska (2:30:55), and 2012 British Olympian Freya Ross (2:28:10). Petersson set her personal best in Chicago last year with a ninth-place finish in 2:30:07. She returns this year hoping to break the Danish national record (2:29:34). Mierzejewska will be making her AWMM debut after finishing in the top three of all six marathons she has run. Ross, coached by 1984 and 1985 Chicago Marathon champion Steve Jones, is returning to elite competition after a broken hip derailed her running plans in 2014 and 2015.

For more information on the 2016 Bank of America Chicago Marathon elite field, visit chicagomarathon.com/2016elites.

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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