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Defending Champions Tatyana McFadden and Kurt Fearnley Highlight Internationally Diverse Professional Wheelchair Field in the 2016 Bank of America Chicago Marathon

Wheelers among the top five men and top five women in the global chase for the inaugural Abbott World Marathon Majors Series X title to race in Chicago

CHICAGO – Today, the Bank of America Chicago Marathon announced that 17-time Abbott World Marathon Majors (AbbottWMM) winner and six-time Chicago Marathon champion Tatyana McFadden and three-time Paralympic gold medalist and five-time Chicago Marathon title holder Kurt Fearnley (AUS) will return to compete for the number one spot at the 39th annual event.

McFadden and Fearnley stand out among one of the most internationally diverse and talented professional wheelchair fields in Chicago Marathon history. Athletes from 11 countries will descend upon the Windy City on October 9 to vie for the Chicago Marathon crown, and to score points in the global chase for the AbbottWMM Series X title.

“Tatyana has established herself as one of the best athletes in the history of the sport, and it is always an honor to have her compete in Chicago. Our spectators know they are watching a legend when they see her race,” said Bank of America Chicago Marathon Executive Race Director Carey Pinkowski. “And Kurt has won more Chicago titles than any male athlete in our history. He has speed and endurance, so if it’s coming down to a sprint finish, you can never count him out. But it will be a real challenge for Tatyana and Kurt to defend their titles with this year’s field.”

McFadden made her marathon debut in Chicago in 2009, outprinting her more seasoned competitors in the closest women’s wheelchair finish in Chicago Marathon history. She placed third in 2010 and she has been undefeated since 2011. She broke her own course record last year, clocking 1:41:10. A win this year would mark her sixth consecutive victory and seventh overall since her debut. McFadden has dominated on the global stage, winning the “grand slam” – the Boston, London, Chicago and New York City marathons - three years in a row. A ten-time summer Paralympic medalist and the only woman to win six gold medals in a single IPC World Championships, McFadden experienced her first defeat in three years at the 2016 Tokyo Marathon. She responded by winning both the Boston and London marathons this spring, moving her solidly into first place on the AbbottWMM leaderboard with 50 points.

Fearnley, a veteran of more than 50 marathons (with over 30 career victories), became a household name in Chicago after completing the three-peat from 2007-2009 and then adding two more victories in 2011 and 2015. He finished second in 2013 and 2014 in historic sprint finishes, losing by just one second each time. He won four consecutive New York City Marathon titles from 2006-2009, and 2007 marked a significant year in his career - he won 10 of 11

marathons and set five course records. In 2006 and 2011, he took home gold medals in the marathon at the IPC World Championships, and he has accumulated a total of 11 Paralympic medals. He started 2016 by beating rival Ernst Van Dyk (RSA) to the line at the Tokyo Marathon, and then picked up a pair of third place finishes in Boston and London.

Women's Field

McFadden's eighth run through 29 dynamic Chicago neighborhoods will be strongly contested by Manuela Schär (SUI). McFadden and Schär are first and second respectively, on the AbbottWMM leaderboard, with McFadden out front by 18 points. Also in the mix – and ranked fourth and fifth on the AbbottWMM leaderboard – are University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign alums Amanda McGrory and Susannah Scaroni.

Schär, the 2013 IPC World Championships marathon gold medalist and the official joint world record-holder in the marathon with Wakako Tsuchida (1:38:07), has emerged as McFadden's main challenger. She finished second to McFadden in Chicago in 2013, 2014 and 2015, and kicked off her 2016 campaign with runner-up finishes to McFadden in Boston and London. She finished 2015 with the fastest time in the world, 1:40:56, and she owns multiple IPC and Paralympic medals. She is the European record holder in the 200m, 400m and 800m. Schär knows the Chicago course well and she has the credentials to hand McFadden her first defeat in six years.

McGrory and Scaroni boast strong histories in Chicago. McGrory is a three-time Chicago Marathon champion (2007, 2008, 2010). She was third in 2009 behind University of Illinois teammate, McFadden. In fact, the U of I duo has won every Chicago Marathon since 2007. McGrory started 2016 with a fourth place in Tokyo, a fifth in Boston and a fourth in London. Scaroni will line up in Chicago for the fifth time. Since her Chicago debut in 2011, she has collected wins in Los Angeles, Twin Cities and Duluth, and she has finished as high as fifth in the world at the IPC World Championships Marathon.

Sandra Graf (SUI), Chelsea McClammer (USA), Shirley Reilly (USA), Arielle Rausin (USA) and Katrina Gerhard (USA) are also returning to take a run at a podium finish.

Men's Field

More than 20 of the world's best professional wheelchair athletes should set the stage for another year of thrilling sprint finishes down Columbus Drive. Fearnley was the runner-up in 2014, when 11 men finished within 11 seconds of each other. The same scenario played out last fall with Fearnley winning the contest as 11 men finished within 13 seconds of each other. Unlike the dominance of a few athletes on the women's side, the men's race remains wide open. Marcel Hug (SUI), Ernst Van Dyk (RSA) and James Senbeta (USA), currently ranked first, third, and fifth, respectively on the AbbottWMM leaderboard (Fearnley is second), will challenge for the title in Chicago.

Marcel Hug, nicknamed the "silver bullet," started his racing season with a pair of victories in Boston and London, winning each race by just one second. Hug competed in his first Chicago Marathon last year, edging out 2014 champion, Josh George for second place in a photo finish. He completed his 2015 season with a third place finish in New York, behind Van Dyk and George. Hug is a two-time Paralympian with a marathon silver medal (Beijing 2008); and he is the 2013 IPC World Championships Marathon gold medalist. Like many athletes in this year's field, he races distances from 400m to 42K.

Van Dyk won the 2013 Chicago Marathon in a sprint finish and then returned in 2014 and 2015 to pursue another Chicago victory. In both instances, he was part of an 11-man dash down Columbus Drive, finishing third and fourth. Van Dyk is best known for capturing 10 wins in Boston, including six consecutive titles from 2001-2006. He made his global debut as a seventeen-year-old at the 1992 Paralympic Games, and he has competed in every Paralympic Games since 1992, including winning back-to-back gold medals in handcycling in 2008 and 2012.

James Senbeta is a relative newcomer to the international stage, and he is the most recent athlete to emerge from the highly esteemed University of Illinois Track and Road Racing Team. He started 2016 with a duo set of fifth place finishes in Boston and London, enough to put him into fifth place on the AbbottWMM leaderboard. Senbeta finished 13th in Chicago last fall, a little more than two minutes behind the lead pack. If the beginning of his 2016 crusade is any indication, he should be a factor in this year's race.

Josh George (USA), a four-time Chicago Marathon champion, leads a strong contingent of challengers. Race day marks his tenth Chicago Marathon, and over the past 10 years, he has finished in the top three seven times.

The following athletes should also be in the hunt for the 2016 title: Gyudae Kim (KOR), Kota Hokinoue (JPN), Rafael Botello Jimenez (ESP), Jose Jimenez Hernandez (CRI), Simon Lawson (GBR), Denis Lemeunier (FRA), Laurens Molina (CRI) and Patrick Monahan (IRL).

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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