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**Boston Marathon Champion Yuki Kawauchi and Olympian Suguru Osako Join 2018 Bank of America Chicago Marathon Elite Field**

*Suguru chasing Japanese national record and 100-million-yen bonus*

Chicago – The Bank of America Chicago Marathon announced today that reigning Boston Marathon champion and “citizen runner” Yuki Kawauchi and 2016 Olympian and Nike Oregon Project runner Suguru Osako will join the elite competition as they both seek to become the first Chicago Marathon champion from Japan since Toshihiko Seko took the crown in 1986.

“Yuki and Suguru are exciting additions to our elite field,” said Executive Race Director of the Bank of America Chicago Marathon Carey Pinkowski. “Yuki has taken an unconventional path to marathon stardom; there’s no other elite runner competing today like him. And Suguru is young in his marathon career with a real chance at breaking the Japanese national record in Chicago.”

Before becoming the 2018 Boston Marathon champion amidst freezing temperatures and pouring rain (where he said, “for me, these are the best conditions possible”), Kawauchi gained global renown for his prolific racing schedule. He holds the record for the most marathons run under 2:20 (79), he boasts a PR of 2:08:14, he has won more than 30 career marathons and he finished 12 marathons in 2017 alone. He has raced more than 20 times in 2018, including running the Kuki Half Marathon dressed in a panda suit and setting a course record at the Yatsugatake Nobeyama 71K ultramarathon in May (he won by 30 minutes). Kawauchi, often referred to as a “citizen runner,” “rebel government clerk” and “emperor of pain,” fits his training and racing in around his full-time job as a government employee, bucking a national trend where most elite runners compete full time on corporate teams. To track Kawauchi’s racing schedule, Brett Larner of Japan Running News dedicates a page of his blog to Kawauchi called “The Kawauchi Counter.”

Kawauchi thundered onto the global stage when he placed third at the 2011 Tokyo Marathon. He explained his marathon tactics in a post-race interview this way: “Every time I run, it’s with the mindset that if I die at this race, it’s ok.”

Compatriot Suguru Osako, based in Portland, OR., will be joining Kawauchi in Grant Park on October 7. Osako is a 2016 Olympian and the Japanese record holder in the 3000m and 5000m. He competed in the 5000m and 10,000m in Rio after winning both events at Japan’s national championships. He made his marathon debut at the 2017 Boston Marathon, landing on the podium in third in 2:10:28. At the time, he was the first Japanese man to finish among the top three since Seko won Boston in 1987. He closed out 2017 with an impressive personal best and third place finish at the Fukuoka Marathon, 2:07:19.

Osako hopes to secure an additional bonus in Chicago by breaking the Japanese national record (2:06:11). If he manages that feat, the Japanese Corporate Track and Field Federation will pay him a 100-million-yen bonus (nearly one million U.S. dollars).

“I want to try to break the national record, but the most important thing to me is to be competitive with the other runners,” said Osako. “I’m really excited and proud to run with Mo and Galen. I’m going to enjoy the challenge.”

Japan has a long history of producing some of the world’s best marathon runners, stretching back to the post-war era of the 1940s and 1950s. Japan dominated the global scene in the 1960s (in 1966 alone, 15 of the top 17 marathon times belonged to Japanese runners). As Tokyo looks ahead to hosting the 2020 Olympics, it hopes to see its marathon runners - like Osako - back in the medal count.

Kawauchi and Osako will be joined by strong field of Japanese athletes at the front of the 2018 field including: Ryo Kiname, Chihiro Miyawaki, Tsukasa Koyama, Taku Fujimoto and Yohei Suzuki.

Journalist interested in covering the 2018 Bank of America Chicago Marathon can apply for media credentials now at [chicagomarathon.com](http://chicagomarathon.com).

### **About the Bank of America Chicago Marathon**

In its 41<sup>st</sup> year on Sunday, October 7, 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. Annually, an estimated 1.7 million spectators line the streets cheering on more than 40,000 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 \$282 million in annual economic impact to its host city. The 2018 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 7. In advance of the race, a two-day Abbott Health & Fitness Expo will be held at McCormick Place Convention Center on Friday, October 5, and Saturday, October 6. For more information about the event and how to get involved, go to [chicagomarathon.com](http://chicagomarathon.com).

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