



Tuesday, September 18, 2018

Defending Champions Tatyana McFadden and Marcel Hug Lead Elite Wheelchair Field Featuring 22 Paralympians from 10 Countries

CHICAGO – The Bank of America Chicago Marathon announced today that 15-time world champion, four-time Paralympic and eight-time Chicago Marathon champion, and course record-holder Tatyana McFadden (USA) and four-time Paralympian, 2016 Paralympic marathon and 800m gold medalist, and Abbott World Marathon Majors (AbbottWMM) Series X and Series XI champion Marcel Hug (SUI) will return to compete for the top spot on the podium at the 41st annual event.

McFadden and Hug lead an internationally diverse and talented professional wheelchair field that includes 22 Paralympians from 10 countries. They will return to Chicago on October 7 to vie for the Chicago Marathon crown.

“Tatyana McFadden and Marcel Hug have become legends in the sport of professional wheelchair racing, and we are excited to welcome both of them back to Chicago for another run at a championship title,” said Bank of America Chicago Marathon Executive Race Director Carey Pinkowski. “It has been incredible to watch the growth of the sport over the last decade, and to see new athletes joining the front of the pack. We have a very competitive field this year.”

Women’s field

McFadden, a 17-time Paralympic medalist (including seven gold medals) and the Bank of America Chicago Marathon course record-holder (1:39:17), made history from 2013 through 2016 as the only female athlete to win four AbbottWMM races in one year: London, Boston, Chicago and New York. She closed out her 2016 season as the 2016-17 AbbottWMM Series X champion, and as the most accomplished champion in Chicago Marathon history. She returns to Chicago to attempt to capture her eighth consecutive Chicago Marathon title and her ninth in the last 10 years. She started her 2018 season with a second-place finish in Tokyo, a win in Boston and a second-place finish in London.

McFadden’s race to the top of the podium will be hotly contested by rivals Manuela Schär (SUI), Amanda McGrory (USA), Madison de Rozario (AUS) and Susannah Scaroni (USA). All five women placed in the AbbottWMM Series XI leaderboard, with Schär on top, McFadden in second, McGrory in third, Scaroni in fourth and de Rozario in fifth.

Schär, a four-time Paralympian, finished second to McFadden 2013-2016. McGrory broke the streak between the two rivals when she finished second to McFadden last fall in a photo finish.

Schär's 2018 season has seen her win in Tokyo, finish fourth in London (just three seconds separated the top four women) and set a world record on the track in the 5,000m. Schär's 1:38:07 in Oita is recognized as the current world record (on a record-eligible course; she and Wakako Tsuchida share the record – they finished first together in Oita). In 2017, she became the fastest female wheelchair athlete in history when she raced 1:28:17 in Boston.

McGrory, a three-time Bank of America Chicago Marathon champion (2007, 2008, 2010), a three-time Paralympian and a seven-time Paralympic medalist, started her 2018 season on a positive note, winning the Bank of America Shamrock Shuffle 8K and finishing fourth in Tokyo, fifth in London and fourth at the NYC Half Marathon. McGrory nearly pulled off the upset last fall, clocking an identical time to McFadden but finishing second. Combined, McFadden and McGrory have won every Chicago Marathon since 2007, a testament to the strength, influence and impact of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Wheelchair Track and Road Racing Program.

De Rozario (AUS) was the youngest athlete to compete in the 2008 Paralympic Games, helping her team win a silver medal in the 4x100m relay while also competing individually in the 100m and 400m. She competed in four events at the 2012 Paralympic Games, and she picked up two silver medals at the 2016 Paralympic Games. De Rozario is the reigning Australian record-holder over 800m and 5,000m, and she successfully transitioned to the marathon more seriously last year. She finished fourth in Chicago, and her time, 1:39:22, was faster than the course record. De Rozario made a huge statement this spring in London, edging McFadden at the line to take her first AbbottWMM victory.

Along with Scaroni, Jenna Fesemyer (USA), Katrina Gerhard (USA), Arielle Rausin (USA), Michelle Wheeler (USA), Aline dos Santos Rocha (BRA) and Margriet Van den Broek (NED) are competing for a top finish.

Men's field

Hug (aka "the silver bullet") dominated a crowded field of stars at last year's Bank of America Chicago Marathon, but with seven of the top 10 finishers from 2017 returning to the start, it should be a thrilling chase down Columbus Drive to the finish line. Four of the top six men (Hug, David Weir, Kurt Fearnley and Daniel Romanchuk) who commanded the AbbottWMM Series XI leaderboard will face off on October 7.

Hug, a two-time Paralympian with a silver and gold in the marathon, enters the Bank of America Chicago Marathon as AbbottWMM Series X and Series XI wheelchair champion. In 2016, he went beyond the grand slam, winning in Boston, London, Rio, Berlin, Chicago and New York. He repeated the grand slam in 2017, winning in Chicago, Berlin, Boston and Tokyo. He commenced his 2018 campaign with a win in Boston and a second-place finish in London. Hug has also won the Berlin Marathon (2011, 2012, 2016), Oita Marathon (2010, 2011, 2012), Schenkon Marathon (2012, 2014) and Seoul Marathon (2013, 2015).

Fearnley (AUS) is Chicago's most decorated male wheelchair athlete with five titles, including three in a row from 2007 to 2009 and then two more in 2011 and 2015 (in his nine appearances, he has finished first or second every time). A veteran of more than 50 marathons (with over 30 wins), he has captured nine medals at the Paralympic Games, including a pair of gold medals in the 2004 and 2008 Paralympic Marathon. He took another gold at the 2011 IPC World Championships Marathon, and he won four consecutive TCS New York City Marathons from 2006 to 2009. Fearnley finished fourth in Tokyo this winter and fifth in London this spring.

Weir (GBR), a three-time Paralympian with one gold medal in the marathon, has competed in every London Marathon since 2000, and in 2017, he became the most successful elite athlete in the history of the London Marathon when he won his seventh title (defeating AbbottWMM Series X and Series XI champion, Hug). Weir made it two in a row this spring when he beat Hug again to the line in a photo finish. He currently holds British records in the 5,000m, 10K, marathon and half marathon, and he is a two-time winner of the New York City Marathon. October 7 marks his first time competing in Chicago.

Josh George (USA) competed in his first Bank of America Chicago Marathon in 2002 as an 18-year-old, finishing fourth among a talented field that included University of Illinois coach Adam Bleakney. He has finished in the top five of the race 11 times, and he is a four-time Chicago Marathon champion, including back-to-back victories in 2003 and 2004, another in 2006 and a nail-biting victory in 2014 where he was chased to the line by 10 men in a near photo finish. George missed defending his 2014 title by two seconds, and he followed Hug and Fearnley to the line in 2016, losing the first spot by just two seconds. He did not race in Chicago last year, but he started off 2018 with an impressive fourth place finish in London. He is a six-time world champion and a four-time Paralympian.

Rounding out the list of top competitors in 2018 is Daniel Romanchuk (USA), Rafael Botello (ESP), Jordi Madera (ESP), Josh Cassidy (CAN), Ryota Yoshida (JPN), Hiroki Nishida (JPN) and Simon Lawson (GBR).

For more information on the 2018 Bank of America Chicago Marathon elite field, visit chicagomarathon.com.

Inaugural Elite Athlete Mentor Program

In an effort to highlight elite-level wheelchair athletes, recognize the legacy of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign wheelchair sports program, and pass the baton to the next generation of wheelchair athletes, the Bank of America Chicago Marathon introduced a new Elite Athlete Mentor Program this summer. The program paired six elite wheelchair athletes from the University of Illinois team with six Chicago-area children with permanent disabilities who are interested in wheelchair sports.

Elite athletes Amanda McGrory, Christian Clemmons, Jenna Fesemyer, Joey Gibbs, Arielle Rausin and Brian Siemann spent the summer communicating with the youth participants,

covering topics like wheelchair athletics, balancing school and athletics, and managing life with a disability.

The culmination of the mentor program for the elite athletes and youth participants Gabi Berthiaume, Kari Craddock, Brannon Duffin, Nellie Meinhardt, Cameron Poole, and Juan Diego Rodarte will take place on race weekend. The youth participants will participate alongside their mentors at the Advocate Health Care International Chicago 5K on Saturday, October 6. They will experience first-hand what it is like to be an elite athlete by visiting the elite athlete hospitality suite, attending the technical meeting, and having a front-row seat for the finish of the Bank of America Chicago Marathon on Sunday, October 7.

Women's Field

First	Last	Country	Marathon PR
Manuela	Schär	SUI	1:28:17
Amanda	McGrory	USA	1:33:13
Susannah	Scaroni	USA	1:33:17
Tatyana	McFadden	USA	1:35:05
Sandra	Graf	SUI	1:35:59
Margriet	van den Broek	NED	1:38:33
Madison	de Rozario	AUS	1:39:22
Katrina	Gerhard	USA	1:40:34
Arielle	Rausin	USA	1:41:26
Aline	dos Santos Rocha	BRA	1:41:40
Jenna	Fesemyer	USA	1:59:52
Yen	Hoang	USA	2:10:29

Men's Field

First	Last	Country	Marathon PR
Marcel	Hug	SUI	1:18:04
Josh	Cassidy	CAN	1:18:25
Kurt	Fearnley	AUS	1:18:51
Hiroki	Nishida	JPN	1:20:28
Josh	George	USA	1:21:47
Rafael	Botello	ESP	1:22:09
Aaron	Pike	USA	1:22:09
Ryota	Yoshida	JPN	1:23:18
Jorge	Madera	ESP	1:23:36
James	Senbeta	USA	1:24:27
Simon	Lawson	GBR	1:25:06
David	Weir	GBR	1:26:17
Dan	Romanchuk	USA	1:26:26
Brian	Siemann	USA	1:26:46
Juan	Valladares	VEN	1:28:04

Patrick	Monahan	IRL	1:29:45
Alfonso	Zaragoza	MEX	1:30:30
Jose	Jimenez Hernandez	CRC	1:31:36
Tristan	Smyth	CAN	1:31:44
Johnboy	Smith	GBR	1:32:45
Francisco	Sanclemente	COL	1:32:57
Alexandre	Dupont	CAN	1:33:14
Jose	Pulido	MEX	1:37:22
Fidel	Aguilar	MEX	1:38:28
Christian	Clemmons	USA	1:39:02
Raymond	Martin	USA	1:51:46
Joey	Gibbs	USA	1:56:18
Brendan	Quinn	USA	1:59:30
Stephen	Koziel	USA	2:40:09
Michael	Fenster	USA	Debut

About the Bank of America Chicago Marathon

In its 41st 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.

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