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2019 Elite Push Rim Competition Welcomes Strong Field Featuring 24 Paralympians From 14 Countries

Chicago to Host 2020 U.S. Paralympic Team Trials Marathon

CHICAGO – The Bank of America Chicago Marathon announced today that the world’s top para-athletes, including previously announced defending champions Manuela Schär (SUI) and Daniel Romanchuk (USA), will compete for the crown and an increased prize purse at the 42nd annual event on Sunday, October 13.

Schär and Romanchuk spearhead a field that includes eight-time Bank of America Chicago Marathon champion and 15-time world champion Tatyana McFadden (USA) and five-time Paralympian, 2013 Chicago Marathon champion and 10-time Boston Marathon champion Ernst Van Dyk (RSA). Five of the top six women on the Abbott World Marathon Majors (AbbottWMM) leaderboard and five of the top 10 men will be in Grant Park this fall.

“The athletes in this year’s field are phenomenal, and it is always an honor to welcome our defending champions back to the start line,” said Bank of America Chicago Marathon Executive Race Director Carey Pinkowski. “Manuela and Daniel continue to raise the bar of para-athletics, and they are leading a new generation of runners to train harder and dream bigger. It’s an exciting time for the sport.”

Top elite athletes

In addition to Schär, the women’s field includes global sensations McFadden, Amanda McGrory (USA), Madison de Rozario (AUS), Susannah Scaroni (USA) and relative newcomer to the AbbottWMM leaderboard Eliza Ault-Connell (AUS).

McFadden, a 17-time Paralympic medalist (including seven gold medals) and the Bank of America Chicago Marathon course record holder (1:39:15), stands out as the most decorated champion in Chicago Marathon history. She tore up the record books from 2012 to 2016 when she won 13 races in a row, and she was the first athlete in history to win four AbbottWMM races in a year. Her 2019 season includes a string of runner-up finishes to Schär in Tokyo, Boston and London.

McGrory, a three-time winner of the Bank of America Chicago Marathon (2007, 2008, 2010), has not raced a major in 2019 (in her only race this season, she finished third at the NYC Mini 10K behind teammates Scaroni and McFadden), but given her consistency in Chicago, she cannot be counted out. Generally a podium finisher, she is a three-time Paralympian, a two-time New York City Marathon champion and a seven-time Paralympic medalist.

De Rozario, a three-time Paralympian and the 2018 Commonwealth Games and London Marathon champion, finished second in Chicago last fall and she currently resides in third place on the AbbottWMM leaderboard. Her 2019 season includes podium finishes in both Boston and London.

Scaroni and Ault-Connell add excitement and strength to this year's list of top contenders. Scaroni, a two-time Paralympian, enters this year's race hot off of setting a world 10K best, 22:22, at the New York Mini 10K. While she has yet to win a major, she has won both the Twin Cities and L.A. marathons, and she finished third in Chicago last fall. Ault-Connell took a break from racing after the 2006 Commonwealth Games, but she started making a comeback in 2017. Since then, she has picked up a silver medal in the marathon at the Commonwealth Games and finished fourth in both New York and Boston.

American athletes Jenna Fesemyer, Arielle Rausin, Yen Hoang and Sammy Rhodes round out this year's women's field.

On the men's side, Romanchuk's rise to the top started in 2018 with victories in Chicago and New York and has continued in 2019 with victories in Boston and London. The 21-year-old phenom will be chased to the finish line by a strong contingent of competitors, including Ernst Van Dyk (RSA), Josh George (USA), Aaron Pike (USA), Hiroki Nishida (JPN) and Johnboy Smith (GBR).

Van Dyk is a legend in the world of para-sports. He first competed in swimming at the 1992 Paralympic Games, and he won medals in cycling at the 2008 (gold), 2012 (silver) and 2016 (gold) Paralympic Games. In addition to winning the Boston Marathon 10 times, he has won Chicago once (2013) and New York twice (2005, 2015).

George, a four-time Paralympian and six-time world champion, competed in his first Bank of America Chicago Marathon in 2002 as an 18-year-old. Throughout his career, he has captured four victories in the windy city (2002, 2003, 2006, 2014) and one in London (2015). He set his current personal best, 1:21:47, at the 2017 Boston Marathon.

Pike, a one-time Paralympian with an eye toward Tokyo 2020, has performed well in Chicago since 2009, placing as high as fourth, but missing out on the top three. That could change this year; he finished 2018 with a fourth-place race in New York, and he opened 2019 with a fourth-place finish in Boston and a new personal best and American record at Grandma's Marathon. He has competed in 24 AbbottWMM events and finished in the top ten 17 times.

Nishida, one of the strongest para-athletes competing from Japan in the AbbottWMM, returns to Chicago after a strong showing in 2018 where he finished fourth. He owns one of the fastest personal bests in the field, 1:20:28 (Boston 2017), and he enters this year's race after finishing 10th in Boston and eighth in London. He collected his only podium finish in 2016 when he finished third at the Berlin Marathon.

Smith, the 2016 Dubai Marathon champion, gained recognition in the AbbottWMM in 2017 when he finished fifth in Berlin and then second in New York. He returned to Berlin last fall to subtract three minutes from his personal record (PR) to finish third in 1:29:44. He opened his 2019 season with a pair of 11th place finishes in Boston and London.

Other top athletes in this year's field include David Weir (GBR), Jorge Madera (ESP), James Senbeta (USA), Rafael Botello (ESP), Fidel Aguilar (MEX), Jose Jimenez Hernandez (CRC), Joey Gibbs (USA), Brian Siemann (USA) and Ryota Yoshida (JPN).

This year's competition also features the inclusion of a new category for results and prize money for athletes classified as T51/T52.

U.S. Paralympic Team Trials

The Bank of America Chicago Marathon will host the 2020 U.S. Paralympic Team Trials Marathon on Sunday, October 13. The nation's top wheelchair racers will have a chance to punch their tickets to compete for Team USA at the 2020 Paralympic Games in Tokyo.

"We are thrilled to be hosting the U.S. Paralympic Team Trials again," said Pinkowski. "So many of our best U.S. athletes are coached by Adam Bleakney at the University of Illinois, so hosting the trials in Chicago is like a hometown race for our future Paralympians. It's going to be a competitive race up front with everyone focused on 2020."

Elite Athlete Mentor Program

The Elite Athlete Mentor Program enters its second annual partnership between the Bank of America Chicago Marathon and the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. In a push to highlight professional para-athletes, recognize the legacy of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign wheelchair sports program, and pass the baton to the next generation of para-athletes, the Bank of America Chicago Marathon introduced the Elite Athlete Mentor Program in 2018. The program pairs six elite para-athletes from the University of Illinois team with six Chicago-area youth with permanent disabilities who are interested in para-sports. The mentors and mentees will compete together race weekend at the Advocate Health Care International Chicago 5K.

"It's no secret that there are some pretty substantial barriers to entering wheelchair racing – it's an uncommon sport requiring expensive custom equipment – which often prevents kids who may otherwise be interested from getting involved," says McGrory, a mentor in the program. "Mentor programs like this help build connections between elite and up-and-coming athletes and make some of those goals more attainable. It's mutually beneficial to everyone involved – kids can chat with the 'pros' about training and equipment, and we, as elite athletes, can help encourage the growth and development of the next generation of wheelchair racers."

Megan Meinhardt, mother to mentee Nellie Meinhardt, adds, "When you're raising a kid with

special needs, you always worry about what's ahead. When you see these kids living independently, working, going to college – they gave me an idea of what Nellie's future can be.”

Elite athletes Amanda McGrory, Christian Clemmons, Jenna Fesemyer, Joey Gibbs, Arielle Rausin and Brian Siemann are continuing their mentor roles with the following youth participants: Kari Craddock, Branon Duffin, Gabriella “Gabi” Berthiaume, Juan Diego Rodarte, Nellie Meinhardt and Cameron Poole.

2019 Women's field

Name	Country	PR
Manuela Schär	SUI	1:28:17
Susannah Scaroni	USA	1:30:42
Tatyana McFadden	USA	1:31:30
Amanda McGrory	USA	1:33:13
Sandra Graf	SUI	1:35:59
Jenna Fesemyer	USA	1:37:02
Madison de Rozario	AUS	1:39:22
Arielle Rausin	USA	1:40:51
Eliza Ault-Connell	AUS	1:41:46
Michelle Wheeler	USA	1:57:33
Yen Hoang	USA	2:01:06
Sammy Rhodes	USA	Debut

2019 Men's field

Name	Country	PR
Ernst Van Dyk	RSA	1:18:04
Josh Cassidy	CAN	1:18:25
Hiroki Nishida	JPN	1:20:28
Aaron Pike	USA	1:20:59
Daniel Romanchuk	USA	1:21:36
Josh George	USA	1:21:47
Rafael Botello	ESP	1:22:09
Jorge Madera	ESP	1:22:10
Patrick Monahan	IRL	1:22:23
Ryota Yoshida	JPN	1:23:18
James Senbeta	USA	1:24:27
Simon Lawson	GBR	1:25:06
Francisco Sanclemente	COL	1:26:27

Brian Siemann	USA	1:26:46
Juan Ramon Valladares	VEN	1:28:04
David Weir	GBR	1:28:57
Fidel Aguilar	MEX	1:29:13
Alfonso Zaragoza	MEX	1:29:37
Johnboy Smith	GBR	1:29:44
Gyu Dae Kim	KOR	1:30:08
Jose Pulido	MEX	1:30:43
Jose Jimenez Hernandez	CRC	1:31:36
Hermin Garic	USA	1:32:27
Brett Gravatt	USA	1:35:05
Christian Clemmons	USA	1:38:08
Joey Gibbs	USA	1:39:06
Tiaan Bosch	RSA	1:39:41
Raymond Martin	USA	1:51:26
Brendan Quinn	USA	1:51:51
Rob Smith	GBR	1:55:51

About the Bank of America Chicago Marathon

In its 42nd year on Sunday, October 13, 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 \$338 million in annual economic impact to its host city. The 2019 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 13. In advance of the race, a two-day Health & Fitness Expo will be held at McCormick Place Convention Center on Friday, October 11, and Saturday, October 12. For more information about the event and how to get involved, go to chicagomarathon.com.

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