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**World Marathon Majors Leader Liliya Shobukhova Ready to Defend Title
at 2010 Bank of America Chicago Marathon**

Series Championship on the Line with Showdown Between Shobukhova and Irina Mikitenko

CHICAGO – The 2010 Bank of America Chicago Marathon today announced the addition of several elite women to its star-studded field currently headlined by defending champion Liliya Shobukhova of Russia and 2009 runner-up Irina Mikitenko of Germany. Like the men’s race, the 2009-2010 World Marathon Majors (WMM) series will likely be decided in Chicago with the highly anticipated rematch between top-ranked Shobukhova (60 points) and the defending WMM series champion Mikitenko, currently ranked second (40 points).

The women’s field, which includes top Americans Magdalena Lewy-Boulet and Desiree Davila, also welcomes 2008 Chicago Marathon champion Lidiya Grigoryeva and Maria Konovalova, both of Russia, British Olympian Liz Yelling, and Japanese star Naoko Sakamoto. In 2009, Shobukhova, Mikitenko and Grigoryeva occupied the top three places on the podium, respectively.

“We are thrilled to welcome this group of world class marathoners to Chicago. It’s shaping up to be one of the strongest fields in our 33-year history and we have an exciting opportunity for both the men’s and women’s World Marathon Majors series to be decided on our race course,” said Executive Race Director Carey Pinkowski. “We will have our top three competitors from last year back on the start line, and Liliya, in particular, has proven to be at the pinnacle of the sport right now and is getting better with each race she runs, but she will have her hands full with this dynamic field.”

Shobukhova is riding the momentum of her second WMM victory at the 2010 Virgin London Marathon where she ran a personal best 2:22:00. Known for her track speed and international success at the 3,000 to 10,000 meter distances, Shobukhova made her marathon debut with a third-place finish in London in 2009 and notched her first marathon victory in Chicago six months later. This year’s Chicago Marathon marks only her fourth appearance at the 26.2-mile distance, where she will aim to better her current personal best and to become only the eighth woman in Chicago Marathon history to win the race more than once.

“Chicago holds a special place in my heart,” said Shobukhova. “It is where I got my first World Marathon Major victory, and my familiarity with the course gives me grounds to believe that I

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can set a personal and national record this fall. The Bank of America Chicago Marathon organization and the enthusiastic crowds are extremely supportive, and I am thankful for the opportunity to once again run in Chicago.”

Standing in Shobukhova’s way will be the fourth fastest woman in marathon history, Irina Mikitenko. With a personal best of 2:19:19 run at the 2008 Berlin Marathon, Mikitenko boasts the quickest time in the women’s field. With three WMM victories (2008, 2009 London and 2008 Berlin) and two WMM series titles (2007-2008 and 2008-2009), she stands out as the world’s most dominant female marathon runner over the last three years. Last fall in Chicago, Mikitenko ran neck-and-neck with Shobukhova for nearly 40 kilometers, but could not match her finishing speed and placed second. On October 10, Shobukhova and Mikitenko will line up against each other for the fourth time.

“The Bank of America Chicago Marathon is an important race for me to win in my career, and after finishing second last year, I am excited for the opportunity to compete for the title again,” said Mikitenko. “There is such a great history of champions in Chicago and I would love to add my name to that list. I know the competition will be steep, but I am looking forward to it.”

The women’s field is far from a two-woman show:

- Two-time Olympian and 2008 Bank of America Chicago Marathon champion Lidiya Grigoryeva brings to the field 13 years of marathon experience and a 2:25:10 personal best set in winning the 2006 Los Angeles Marathon. She placed third at last year’s Chicago Marathon.
- Budding Russian star Maria Konovalova will look to improve upon her 16th place debut at the London Marathon this spring, where ran 2:35:21. Her track speed (14:38 for 5,000m and 30:31 for 10,000m) points to potential for a substantially faster performance this fall.
- Liz Yelling is a two-time Olympic marathoner from Great Britain with a personal best of 2:28:33 at the 2008 London Marathon. She placed fourth at the 2007 Chicago Marathon.
- Naoko Sakamoto is a Japanese Olympian who placed seventh at the 2004 Athens Olympic Marathon and fourth at the 2003 IAAF World Championships Marathon. She ran a personal best of 2:21:51 (top 50 all-time) at the 2003 Osaka International Ladies Marathon.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Country</u>	<u>Personal Best</u>
Irina Mikitenko	Germany	2:19:19 (Berlin, 2008)
Naoko Sakamoto	Japan	2:21:51 (Osaka, 2003)
Liliya Shobukhova	Russia	2:22:00 (London, 2010)
Lidiya Grigoryeva	Russia	2:25:10 (Los Angeles, 2006)
Magdalena Lewy-Boulet	United States	2:26:22 (Rotterdam, 2010)
Colleen De Reuck	United States	2:26:35 (Berlin, 1996)
Desiree Davila	United States	2:27:53 (World Championships, 2009)
Liz Yelling	Great Britain	2:28:33 (London, 2008)
Melissa White	United States	2:32:55 (Chicago, 2009)
Tera Moody	United States	2:32:59 (Chicago, 2009)
Maria Konovalova	Russia	2:35:21 (London, 2010)

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About the Bank of America Chicago Marathon

In its 33rd year and a member of the World Marathon Majors, the Bank of America Chicago Marathon annually attracts 45,000 participants, including a world class elite field and a world class elite wheelchair field, and 1.7 million spectators. As a result of its national and international draw, the iconic race assists in raising \$10 million for a variety of charitable causes while generating a \$150 million economic impact to its host city. The 2010 Bank of America Chicago Marathon will start and finish in Chicago's Grant Park beginning at 7:30 a.m. on Sunday, October 10. In advance of the race, a two-day Health & Fitness Expo will be held at McCormick Place Convention Center on Friday, October 8 and Saturday, October 9. More information on the race and how to get involved is available at the event Web site, chicagomarathon.com.

www.chicagomarathon.com

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