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National Record Holders and Olympic Hopefuls Deepen International Elite Field for 2011 Bank of America Chicago Marathon

2011 Bank of America Chicago Marathon Selected as Paralympic Qualifying Race for U.S. Athletes; Champions Amanda McGrory and Heinz Frei Return to Defend Wheelchair Titles

CHICAGO—The Bank of America Chicago Marathon today announced a diverse group of international athletes—including several national record holders—who will match strides against Russia's Liliya Shobukhova, America's Ryan Hall, and Kenya's Moses Mosop on the flat and fast streets of Chicago on October 9. With the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games less than a year away, the 34th annual Bank of America Chicago Marathon continues to shape up as a pivotal world-class competition for athletes vying for Olympic team berths. This includes an exclusive opportunity for American wheelchair racers to compete for four (top two men and women) automatic qualifying spots for the 2012 U.S. Paralympic Team.

"This year's elite field is one of the most internationally diverse and talented that we have ever hosted at the Bank of America Chicago Marathon, with the top athletes in the world hailing from six continents—North America, South America, Europe, Asia, Africa and Australia," said Executive Race Director Carey Pinkowski. "The competitive atmosphere on October 9 will be like that of the Olympic Games—a true celebration of the global nature of the sport and a thrill for the residents and sports fans of our diverse city."

Bidding for her third straight Bank of America Chicago Marathon title, Shobukhova, the Russian record holder in the marathon, will face perhaps her fiercest competition from Kayoko Fukushi, the Japanese recorder holder in the 3,000 meters (8:44.40), 5,000 meters (14:53.22) and half-marathon (1:07:26), who will be looking to add the national marathon record to her impressive list of accomplishments. Fukushi, a two-time Olympian, struggled in her highly anticipated marathon debut at Osaka in 2008, but aims to fulfill her marathon promise in her second attempt at the distance.

"At this year's Bank of America Chicago Marathon, I want to challenge the 2:20 mark, and also test my own abilities in the marathon and what the distance involves," said Fukushi. "Racing in Chicago is the start of my preparation for the 2012 Olympic Games Marathon in London."

Christelle Daunay, who set the French record (2:24:22) with her runner-up performance at the 2010 Paris Marathon, and Benita Willis, who set the Australian record (2:22:36) with her third-place finish at the 2006 Chicago Marathon, will also factor heavily into the mix. Both athletes will be looking to make a statement at the Bank of America Chicago Marathon as they prepare for next summer's Olympic Marathon.

Finish times, not just placement, are of the essence for the Russian contingent that, in addition to Shobukhova, includes Inga Abitova, runner-up at the 2010 Virgin London Marathon, and Maria Konovalova, third-place finisher at last year's Bank of America Chicago Marathon. The Russian Olympic Federation will select its Olympic Marathon team based on the two fastest times run by Russian athletes between September 1 and December 31, 2011.

China's Wei Yanan, the two-time Seoul Marathon champion, and Yue Cao, were also added to the women's elite field.

The men's competition will be far from a two-person race between Hall, the American record holder in the half-marathon (59:43), and Mosop, Kenya's second fastest marathoner (2:03:06). Brazil's Marilson Dos Santos, the two-time ING New York City Marathon champion (2006 and 2008) and national record holder in the half-marathon (59:33), returns to the Bank of America Chicago Marathon for the first time since finishing sixth in 2004 with his eye on Ronaldo Da Costa's Brazilian and South American record of 2:06:05. Japan's Atsushi Sato, the national record holder in the half marathon (1:00:25), will attempt to break the Japanese marathon record of 2:06:16, which was set on the same course by Toshinari Takaoka at the 2002 Chicago Marathon.

In addition to Sato, the men's field welcomes a group of Japanese athletes looking to make a positive impression on their nation's Olympic selection committee in the run-up to the 2012 Games, including Takayuki Matsumiya (2:10:04), Takashi Horiguchi (2:12:05), Kouji Gokaya (2:12:07), Hironori Arai (2:12:17), Masaki Shimoju (2:12:18) and Yuuki Moriwaki (2:13:34). Similarly, Columbia's Jason Gutierrez (2:13:24) and Diego Colorado (2:16:45) have chosen the Bank of America Chicago Marathon to post Olympic qualifying performances—and perhaps challenge their country's national mark of 2:11:17 set by Carlos Grisales at the 1996 Boston Marathon.

In the elite wheelchair competition, the 2011 Bank of America Chicago Marathon was selected by the United States Olympic Committee (USOC) – Paralympic Division to serve as an automatic qualifier for the 2012 Paralympic Games. The top two American finishers (male and female) with the National Team "A" Standard will represent Team USA in London next summer. The Bank of America Chicago Marathon is the only marathon in the country selected to guarantee placement on the U.S. Paralympic Track & Field Team this year—and the first ever to be so designated.

The wheelchair race will feature defending champions Amanda McGrory of the U.S. and Heinz Frei of Switzerland. McGrory, who is based out of Champaign, Ill., and represents the University of Illinois racing team, is aiming for her fourth victory in the last five years. Her only defeat came in 2009 at the hands of her U of I teammate, Tatyana McFadden, who will be on the start line again this year, along with Canada's Diane Roy and Australia's Christie Dawes, the second and fifth place finishers, respectively, at the 2009 Bank of America Chicago Marathon.

Frei, in his first appearance at the Bank of America Chicago Marathon, sped to a course record of 1:26:56 last year, breaking the three-year-old mark held by Australia's Kurt Fearnly, who missed the 2010 competition after earning three consecutive victories from 2007-2009. This year's race will be a highly anticipated showdown between the two champions, with the course record once again in jeopardy.

Race Weekend Media Information

Media planning to attend the 2011 Bank of America Chicago Marathon should note that individual elite athlete press opportunities will begin Thursday afternoon, October 6, prior to the traditional Elite Athlete Press Conference on Friday morning. Additionally, the Thursday morning press conference will include interview opportunities with U.S. Women's National Soccer Team member Abby Wambach, who is serving as a co-captain of the Bank of America Chicago Marathon's "Let's Run Together" Charity Relay. For more details, go to [facebook.com/chicagomarathon](https://www.facebook.com/chicagomarathon).

Media may now apply for credentials to cover the 2011 Bank of America Chicago Marathon online at www.chicagomarathon.com/mediacredentials.

About the Bank of America Chicago Marathon

In its 34th 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 runner and wheelchair field, and an estimated 1.7 million spectators. As a result of its national and international draw, each year, the iconic race assists in raising millions for a variety of charitable causes while generating \$170 million in economic impact to its host city according to a report by the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign's Regional Economics Applications Laboratory (R.E.A.L.). The 2011 Bank of America Chicago Marathon will start and finish in Chicago's Grant Park beginning at 7:30 a.m. on October 9. In advance of the race, a two-day Health & Fitness Expo will be held at McCormick Place Convention Center on October 7-8.

www.chicagomarathon.com

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