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Reigning Champions Rita Jeptoo and Tatyana McFadden Headline the 2014 Bank of America Chicago Marathon Elite Athlete Field

CHICAGO – The Bank of America Chicago Marathon today announced that defending champions Rita Jeptoo and Tatyana McFadden, fresh off of World Marathon Majors (WMM) victories in Boston, will return to Chicago to chase consecutive titles.

“Rita Jeptoo and Tatyana McFadden are among two of the fastest and most exciting athletes competing in the world today,” said Bank of America Chicago Marathon Executive Race Director Carey Pinkowski. “They know how to close a race with the kind of finishing speed that really makes them stand out. To have them come back to defend their titles sets the stage for another year of sensational racing in Chicago.”

Kenya’s Jeptoo ran her first career sub-2:20 marathon in Chicago last year with a time of 2:19:57, the fastest women’s marathon time of 2013. Continuing strong, she opened her 2014 marathon campaign in Boston with a forceful 2:18:57, smashing the previous course record by almost two minutes and setting a new personal best.

Jeptoo arrives in Chicago with the potential to rewrite the record books by becoming the third woman in history to run three sub-2:20 marathons. The running world has not witnessed this feat in more than a decade since former Chicago champions and World Record holders Catherine Ndereba (KEN) and Paula Radcliffe (GBR) traded course and world records in London and Chicago.

Jeptoo’s Chicago history includes her 2012 stride-for-stride sprint finish down Columbus Ave., succumbing to Atsede Baysa (ETH) by a step, running 2:22:04 to Baysa’s 2:22:03. Jeptoo redeemed herself by winning the 2013 Boston Marathon the following April and returned to Chicago last fall with a renewed strength and determination. With her electrifying speed, she emerged as the first Kenyan to take home a Chicago victory since Ndereba in 2001. Jeptoo currently stands atop the WMM leaderboard, coming off an impressive performance in Boston where she outraced one of the best women’s fields ever assembled in the race’s illustrious history.

McFadden, a U.S. 10-time Summer Paralympic track and field medalist, returns to capture her fourth consecutive wheelchair Chicago Marathon victory and her fifth in the last six years. McFadden shattered Chicago's long-standing course record in 2013 after a blistering sprint finish where she defeated Manuela Schaer by two seconds. McFadden's 1:42:35 took down the previous mark set in 1992.

Her 10 WMM victories in just six years of elite marathon racing highlight her world-class dominance among a competitive field of elite women. She is the only athlete ever to win four WMM (Boston, London, Chicago and New York) in the same year.

Like Jeptoo, McFadden holds a convincing edge over her competitors. Hailing from the University of Illinois, home to the most storied wheelchair track and field program in the U.S., McFadden, a four-time Paralympian, made her marathon debut in Chicago in 2009, outsprinting her more seasoned competitors in one of the closest women's wheelchair races in Chicago Marathon history.

McFadden, who grew up in Clarksville, Md., grabbed consecutive titles in London and Boston over an eight-day span in April, just 32 days after winning a silver medal in cross-country skiing at the Sochi 2014 Paralympic Winter Games. In her wake, she has taken down course records in London (breaking her own course record in 2014) and Chicago, narrowly missing Boston's course record this year – on her 25th birthday – by 60 seconds while setting a personal best by more than seven minutes (1:35:06).

About the Bank of America Chicago Marathon

In its 37th 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 athlete field, and an estimated 1.7 million spectators. As a result of its national and international draw, the iconic race assists in raising millions of dollars for a variety of charitable causes while generating \$243 million in annual economic impact to its host city. The 2014 Bank of America Chicago Marathon will start and finish in Grant Park beginning at 7:30 a.m. on Sunday, October 12, 2014. In advance of the race, a two-day Health & Fitness Expo will be held at McCormick Place Convention Center on Friday, October 10, and Saturday, October 11. For more information about the event and how to get involved, go to chicagomarathon.com.

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