



October 9, 2016

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Abel Kirui and Florence Kiplagat Crowned Champions at the 2016

Bank of America Chicago Marathon

Tatyana McFadden captures her seventh win and Marcel Hug takes the title in a photo finish

CHICAGO -- In today's Bank of America Chicago Marathon, 40,400 runners crossed the finish line in Chicago's "front yard," Grant Park, as ideal weather conditions greeted them as well as thousands of volunteers and more than 1.7 million spectators. For the second consecutive year, race organizers did not use pacesetters, resulting in championship style racing and head-to-head competition. The men's race saw a new champion crowned as 2012 Olympic marathon silver medalist Abel Kirui (KEN) held off defending champion Dickson Chumba (KEN) down the homestretch, 2:11:23 to 2:11:26, respectively. Gideon Kipketer (KEN) arrived a distant third in 2:12:20.

In stark contrast to the men's race, Florence Kiplagat (KEN) led a pack of women through the first 19 miles on sub 2:22 pace and then threw down a 5:10 mile to break away from the pack and defend her title. Kiplagat ran the fifth fastest time in the world this year and the 13th fastest time in Bank of America Chicago Marathon history, 2:21:32. Double IAAF World Championships Marathon winner Edna Kiplagat (KEN) was the runner up in 2:23:28, and Valentine Kipketer (KEN) claimed the final spot on the podium in 2:23:41.

In the women's wheelchair competition, Tatyana McFadden (Clarksville, MD.) defended her title, beating Switzerland's Manuela Schär by one second at the line in 1:42:28, taking home her sixth straight victory and her seventh win at the Bank of America Chicago Marathon, making her the most decorated champion in race history. The men's competition featured another thrilling finish with the top nine men finishing within 16 seconds of each other. Abbott World Marathon Majors Series X leader Marcel Hug (SUI) edged out Kurt Fearnley (AUS) in a photo finish in 1:32:57, earning his first career Chicago Marathon victory. 2014 champion Joshua George (Champaign, Ill.) was a close third in 1:32:59.

The Men's Race

The men's race moved out slowly on 2:19 pace as a large pack engaged in a cat and mouse game of erratic running and sudden surges followed by pedestrian pacing. Throughout the day, the pace ranged from 4:33 per mile to 5:24 per mile. After running

in a tight cluster for six miles, Ethiopian Abayneh Ayele made a break and Gideon Kipketer followed. Ayele zig-zagged across the road at mile 8 to try to shake his competitor, but eventually slipped back into the pack.

Paul Lonyangata (KEN) was the next runner to move out in front, but the chase pack quickly reeled him in, and a pair of Japanese runners, Takuya Fukatsu and Koji Gokaya, took a group of 14 men through one of the slowest half marathon splits in the last two decades, 1:06:50. As temperatures lingered in the mid-50s, Kipketer stepped on the gas, making it a six-person race by Mile 15, and a four person race with 10K to go: Kipketer, Chumba, Lonyangata and Kirui.

Lonyangata was the first to drop back shortly after 35K, and Kipketer was the next to go. With two and a half miles remaining, the race transitioned into a heated duel between an Olympic medalist, Kirui, and the defending champion, Chumba. Kirui and Chumba jockeyed back and forth, dropping the pace considerably, before Kirui put in a final attack that Chumba could not match. Kirui ran the slowest time, 2:11:23, since 1993 in a race that Bank of America Chicago Marathon Executive Race Director Carey Pinkowski called “spirited,” “entertaining” and “great theater.”

American Diego Estrada (Flagstaff, Ariz.) was the first American across the line in eighth place, despite rolling his ankle in a fall at the 10K mark. Estrada clocked 2:13:56. American Elkanah Kibet (Fayetteville, NC) rounded out the top 10 in 2:16:37. Kibet finished seventh in 2015.

The Women’s Race

Unlike the men’s race, the women’s race emerged as a replay of 2015 with an aggressive start. Defending champion Florence Kiplagat was not content with the fartlek-like tactics of the men’s race, opting instead for a swift speed-show through Chicago’s 29 neighborhoods.

Kiplagat started with a pack of seven women through 15K before 2010 and 2012 champion, Atsede Baysa (ETH) became the first casualty of the fast pace and fell off the back of the pack. Kiplagat led the pack through the half in 1:10:29. The same group of six remained together through 30K until AWMM newcomer Visiline Jepkesho (KEN) hit the brakes and eventually dropped out after 35K.

The women picked up the pace from miles 17-19, running faster than the men’s lead pack for the same stretch, and with 10K remaining, Kiplagat dropped the hammer and never looked back. After controlling the tempo, she sealed her second Chicago victory with a 5:10 mile, effortlessly floating over the infamous 20-mile wall in Pilsen.

Kiplagat’s winning time, 2:21:32, was two minutes faster than her time last year. Edna Kiplagat failed to match the blistering pace of her compatriot over the final 10K, but she hung on to finish second in 2:23:28, and Valentine Kipketer matched her brother’s finishing place for third in 2:23:41.

A strong trio of American women cracked the top 10 with Serena Burla (Stafford, VA.) leading the way in seventh in 2:30:40. Sarah Crouch (Moorehead, KY.), competing in her third Chicago Marathon, finished ninth in 2:33:48 and Alia Gray (Boulder, CO.) set a personal best for tenth place in 2:34:00.

The Professional Wheelchair Race

Tatyana McFadden once again rewrote the record books by capturing her seventh Chicago Marathon victory, marking her 19th Abbott World Marathon Majors win, and setting herself up for a record fourth straight grand slam if she wins New York (in 2013, 2014, and 2015 she won four majors in the same year: Boston, London, Chicago and New York). For the fourth straight year, Manuela Schär (SUI) finished second to McFadden. Schär remained in contention until the finish line. Three-time Chicago Marathon winner Amanda McGrory (Savoy, Ill.) finished third in 1:47:55.

Marcel Hug led the way in the men's race, finishing ahead of one of the most competitive fields in history. Nine men made the turn from Roosevelt Road onto Columbus Drive within seconds of each other. Hug battled five-time Chicago Marathon winner and defending champion Fearnley to the tape in a spectacular photo finish. 2014 Chicago Marathon champion Joshua George finished third in 1:32:59.

About the Bank of America Chicago Marathon

In its 39th year, 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. In 2016, an estimated 1.7 million spectators lined the streets cheering on 40,400 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 \$277 million in annual economic impact to its host city. The 2017 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 8. In advance of the race, a two-day Abbott Health & Fitness Expo will be held at McCormick Place Convention Center on Friday, October 6, and Saturday, October 7. For more information about the event and how to get involved, go to chicagomarathon.com.

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