



## MARATHON NEWS

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### **Defending Champ, Course Record Holders Among Elites Heading to Houston**

*\$232,500 Prize Purse, USA Half Marathon Championships on the Line*

**HOUSTON, January 02, 2008** – The women's defending champion and course record holder in the marathon and the women's course record holder in the half marathon will be among the elite runners on the start lines of the Chevron Houston Marathon and Aramco Houston Half Marathon on January 13, 2008.

The elites will race the clock and each other for \$232,500 in prize and time bonus money.

The men's marathon course record of 2:10:04, set in 1989, is within reach of several runners this year. Among the most likely to challenge are Ethiopian Kasime Adilo, who clocked a 2:10:20 in September; Kenyan David Cheruiyot, who won here in 2005 and 2006 and set a PR of 2:10:35 in May; and Tomas Abyu of Great Britain, who ran 2:10:37 in October. Also expected in the lead pack are Ridouane Harroufi, who owns a 1:01:01 PR in the half marathon distance, Joseph Chirlee of Kenya and Mikhail Khobotov of Russia.

In the women's race, Dire Tune of Ethiopia returns to Houston to defend the course record of 2:26:52 that she set in 2007. Her most likely competitors include fellow Ethiopian Worknesh Tola, who ran 2:25 in 2005 and Julia Vinokurova of Russia, who ran 2:33:25 for a third-place finish here in 2006. Other women expected to lead the field include Olga Kovpotina of the Ukraine, who owns a 2:27:37 PR, and Larisa Malikova of Russia, who has a PR of 2:32:17.

The Aramco Houston Half Marathon will again host the USA Half Marathon Championships, ensuring a stellar field on race day.

Dan Browne, who finished sixth in the Marathon Olympic Trials in New York City in November, finished third here in 2005, 8<sup>th</sup> in 2007 and set his half marathon PR (1:03:09) here in 2004, finishing second. Jason Lehmkuhle finished fifth here in 2007 with a PR of 1:02:51, took fourth place in 2005 and was a Top 5 finisher in the Olympic Trials in November. Fernando Cabada clocked a 1:02:45 for his half marathon PR in 2006 and Travis Laird, the 9<sup>th</sup> place finisher here in 2007, crossed the finish line in 1:03:57.

Rounding out the field are Matt Gabrielson, who ran his half marathon PR of 1:04:06 here in 2005, Peter Gilmore, Ryan Kirkpatrick, Steve Sundell and James Carney.

Elva Dryer, the women's defending champion who broke the tape in 1:11:42 in 2007, will be back, with plenty of competition. Looking to challenge for this year's half marathon National Championship title are Kate O'Neill, Michelle Lillienthal, Kristin Price, Ann Alyanak and Blake Russell. O'Neill, Lillienthal, Price and Alyanak set half marathon PRs in 2007, and Price and Alyanak also PR'ed at the marathon distance last year.

Also returning to Houston are Colleen De Reuck, a three-time Olympian who set the half marathon course record of 1:10:55 in 2004 at age 39 and Kelly (Keane) Liljeblad, who won the marathon in 2005.

Rounding out the field for the women are Desiree Davila, who ran a PR 1:12:54 in 2007, Kristen Fryburg, who clocked her 1:12:57 PR in 2007, and Zoila Gomez, who ran her PR of 1:13:49 here in 2007.

The 2008 Chevron Houston Marathon will be run on January 13, 2008.

The Chevron Houston Marathon, a Running USA founding member, is the nation's premier winter marathon, annually attracting participants from all 50 U.S. states and more than 24 countries. The marathon offers the only closed marathon course in Texas and is ranked among the top five in the nation by the *Ultimate Guide to Marathons* for fastest course, organization and crowd support. More than 5,000 volunteers organize the race, which is Houston's largest single-day sporting event. More information is available online at [www.chevronhoustonmarathon.com](http://www.chevronhoustonmarathon.com) or 713-957-3453.

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