

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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Regassa, Kilel headline Aramco Houston Half Marathon

HOUSTON (Jan. 4, 2012) – Tilahun Regassa of Ethiopia, one of the fastest half marathoners in the world, and **Caroline Kilel** of Kenya, winner of the 2011 Boston Marathon, lead an international field for the Aramco Houston Half Marathon on Sunday, January 15. The race, which begins at 7:00 a.m., features a top prize of \$10,000 to both the men's and women's winner.

The Aramco Houston Half Marathon is one of four races to be hosted the weekend of January 14-15 by the Houston Marathon Committee. On Saturday, January 14, the men's and women's U.S. Olympic Trials Marathon for the first time will be contested on the same day on the same course, while on Sunday the Chevron Houston Marathon will celebrate its 40th running.

Regassa, just 21, is perhaps best known in this country as the pacesetter who led Moses Mosop to his course-record victory in the 2011 Bank of America Chicago Marathon, but his half-marathon credentials mark him as one of the best in the world the past few years. In 2008, in his debut at the distance at the age of 18, Regassa's winning time of 59:36 at the Lille Metropole Half Marathon in France made him the ninth-fastest man in the world that year. In 2010, his personal best of 59:19 ranked him #2.

Challenging Regassa in the men's field will be fellow Ethiopian **Sisay Ezkyas** and Americans **Scott Bauhs, Jon Grey, and Scott Smith**.

Ezkyas, based in Flagstaff, AZ, has a half-marathon best of 1:01:56. The 23-year-old won four of the six half marathons he contested in 2011, and ran with the leaders much of the way before finishing a breakthrough ninth in the ING New York City Marathon. Bauhs, 25, set his personal best of 1:02:39 in winning the 2010 Rock 'n' Roll Las Vegas Half Marathon, while Grey and Smith will be making their half-marathon debuts. Grey, 23, was the surprise winner of last month's USATF National Club Cross Country Championships and Smith, 25, posted five top-10 finishes in national-championship races in 2011.

On the women's side, the 30-year-old Kilel won the biggest –and perhaps most dramatic – race of her career when she managed a last-second surge past American Desiree Davila to win the 2011 Boston Marathon by two seconds, in 2:22:36. (Davila's time of 2:22:38 in that race makes her the fastest contender in the women's Olympic Marathon Trials on Saturday.) Her personal-best of 1:08:16 was set when she finished fourth in the 2009 IAAF World Half Marathon Championships.

Lining up alongside Kilel will be **Belainesh Gebre** and **Belaynesh Oljira**, a pair of rising Ethiopian stars.

Gebre, 24, was fourth last year in the Chevron Houston Marathon and set a marathon personal best by almost six minutes, 2:26:17, when she finished fourth last fall at the Bank of America Chicago Marathon. Oljira, 21, was the sixth-fastest woman in the world last year with her half-marathon personal best, by almost three minutes, of 1:07:27.

About the Houston Marathon Committee, Inc.

Established in 1972, the Houston Marathon Committee, Inc. (HMC), a Running USA Founding Member, annually organizes the nation's premier winter marathon, half-marathon, 5K and kids' fun run. In 2011, more than 30,000 runners participated in four race weekend events organized by 7,500 volunteers, creating Houston's largest single-day sporting event. In addition to hosting numerous world-renowned road races, including the USA Men's and Women's Half Marathon Championships since 2005 and 2007, respectively, and the 1992 U.S. Women's Olympic Marathon Trials, HMC will host the 2012 U.S. Men's and Women's Olympic Team Trials - Marathon on January 14, 2012.

For more information, visit houstonmarathon.com or call 713.957.3453.

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