

# PRESS RELEASE

## For Immediate Release

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## American Record Holder Hall Returns to USA Half Marathon Championships in Houston

**HOUSTON (Jan. 10, 2011)** - **Ryan Hall**, who shattered the U.S. half-marathon record with a scintillating 59:43 here in 2007, headlines the **2011 USA Half Marathon Championships** field. Scheduled to run along with the 2008 Olympian are both 2010 national runner-ups and three Olympians. The 13.1 mile national championship hosted by **Aramco Services Company** will be held on Saturday, January 29 one day prior to the **39<sup>th</sup> Chevron Houston Marathon**. This year, the country's best distance runners and Olympic hopefuls will also have the unique opportunity to compete on the **2012 U.S. Olympic Trials Marathon** multi-loop course.

"With the 2012 Olympic Marathon Trials just a year away now, I am excited to return to a very special place for me to check out the course that all U.S. marathoners will be racing on in an effort to make the Olympic Team," said the 2007 Olympic Trials Marathon Champion. "Running the course of a marathon is always helpful, but racing the actual course before the marathon is an even bigger advantage. I'm excited to have this opportunity to begin my 2011 season in Houston as I build my momentum toward the Boston Marathon."

Hall, 28, a five-time USA champion, will face a talented men's field including last year's runner-up **Patrick Smyth** and third place finisher **Brent Vaughn**, who ran their debut half-marathons here in 1:02:01 and 1:02:04, respectively. In addition, three-time Olympian and multi-national champion **Abdi Abdirahman** and 2010 USA 15 km champion **Mo Trafeh**, who ran the fastest U.S. half-marathon in 2010 with his 1:00:39 (#4 U.S. all-time), will also give Hall, the 2007 USA Half Marathon champion, plenty of competition for the 2011 crown.

For the U.S. women, **Serena Burla**, 28, runner-up last year in a personal record 1:10:08, is the top returnee, and like Hall, she will face a formidable, experienced field including three-time Olympian **Jen Rhines**, 2008 Olympic marathoner and 2009 USA Half Marathon champion **Magdalena Lewy Boulet** and seven-time national titlist and 2010 USA Running Circuit champion **Katie McGregor**.

"These are almost certainly the most competitive men's and women's fields that our invited athlete team has assembled since our hosting of the USA Half Marathon Championships began with the men in 2005 and the women in 2007," said Brant Kotch, president and race director of the Houston Marathon Committee. "The chance to try out the 2012 Olympic Trials Marathon's eight-mile loop in an ultra-competitive setting has been a real boon for luring America's very best distance runners to Houston later this month."

The USA Championship prize purse totals \$59,500 with \$12,000 for each national champion. In addition, the event also offers a cumulative bonus structure for the first runner to break the existing race and U.S. records seen below.

<b>BONUS</b>	<b>MEN</b>	<b>WOMEN</b>
\$4000 Race Record	59:43 (2007)	1:09:41 (2010)
\$5000 U.S. Record	59:43 (2007)	1:07:34 (2006)

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## **American Record Holder Hall Returns to USA Half Marathon Championships in Houston**

### **Page 2**

The 2011 USA Half Marathon Championships will mark Houston's seventh and fifth year to host the men's and women's national road championships, respectively. In 2007, Ryan Hall set the U.S. men's record with his superlative 59:43, and last January, **Antonio Vega** and 2008 Olympic bronze medalist **Shalane Flanagan** won U.S. titles in 1:01:54 and 1:09:41 respectively. Vega set a personal record by more than a minute, while Flanagan's 13.1 mile debut time was a course and Texas state record as well as one of the fastest run by an American woman.

Houston will host the 2012 U.S. Olympic Trials Marathon on Saturday, January 14, 2012, a first for a single city to host both the men's and women's events at the same Trials. To date, 95 U.S. men and 120 U.S. women have qualified for the 2012 Olympic Marathon Trials. The top 150 male and female distance runners are expected to compete in Houston January 2012 to qualify for the six-member U.S. Olympic marathon team at the London Olympic Games.

The general public is invited to run with the professional athletes competing in the 2011 USA Half Marathon Championships. A limited number of VIP packages will be offered to the public. Details about the VIP packages can be found on the event website ([houstonmarathon.com](http://houstonmarathon.com)).

#### **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 2010, 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 the 1992 U.S. Women's Olympic Marathon Trials, HMC will host the 2012 U.S. Men's and Women's Olympic Marathon Trials on January 14, 2012.

For more information, visit [houstonmarathon.com](http://houstonmarathon.com) or call (713) 957-3453.

#### **About USA Track & Field**

USA Track & Field (USATF) is the National Governing Body for track and field, long-distance running and race walking in the United States. USATF encompasses the world's oldest organized sports, some of the most-watched events of Olympic broadcasts, the #1 high school and junior high school participatory sport and more than 30 million adult runners in the United States.

For more information on USATF, visit [www.usatf.org](http://www.usatf.org).

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