



Strong International Fields Assembled for 2010 Chevron Houston Marathon, Americans to Vie for Half Marathon Titles

HOUSTON (Jan. 11, 2010) - Runners from Ethiopia, Kenya and the United States are expected to set the pace this Sunday in Houston, as a record 22,000 runners compete in the Chevron Houston Marathon and Aramco Houston Half Marathon.

In the 38th annual Chevron Houston Marathon, 2009 winner and course record holder **Teyba Erkesso** returns to defend her crown. Running her debut marathon in Houston a year ago, Ethiopia's Erkesso crossed the finish line in 2:24:18. Her blistering pace of 5:30 per mile clipped 22 seconds off the course record previously held by fellow Ethiopian Dire Tune. The time is the fastest marathon ever run in Texas by a female.

Joining the top-seeded Erkesso on the starting line are American **Paige Higgins** (No. 2), **Tara Quinn-Smith** (No. 3) of Canada and Kenya's **Lydia Kurgat** (No. 4 seed). Rounding out the top five seeds is **Margarita Plaksina** of Russia, who won the 2009 Helsinki City Marathon.

Kenyans are the top two seeds in the men's marathon. **Jason Mbote**, who ran 2:07:37 at the 2008 Seoul International Marathon, is the No. 1 seed, followed by **Charles Kibiwott**, who clocked 2:08:30 at the same race in Seoul.

American **Brett Gotcher** (Flagstaff, Ariz), third in the 2009 USA Half Marathon Championships in Houston, returns to the Space City for his marathon debut. The former Stanford University All-American won his first national road title at 20k in September and is seeded third. The No. 4 seed is cross-country specialist **Zembaba Yigeze**, while **Hussan Adelo** is the No. 5 seed. Both runners are from Ethiopia.

Elite runners in both men's and women's marathons will be vying for \$130,000 in prize money, with a \$35,000 first-place award in both races.

Lewy Boulet, Flanagan head women's half marathon field

For the fourth consecutive year, the Aramco Houston Half Marathon is hosting the USA Women's Half Marathon Championships, and 2009 champion **Magdalena Lewy Boulet** (Oakland, Calif.) is returning to defend her title. Lewy Boulet is the No. 1 seed, coming off her 1:11:47 effort last year.

Shalane Flanagan (Pittsboro, N.C.), who took bronze in the 10,000m at the 2008 Olympics, is making her half marathon debut as the race's No. 2 seed. Seeded third is the 2004 winner of the Aramco Houston Half Marathon, **Colleen De Reuck** (Boulder, Colo.). De Reuck holds the course record from that race, which she won in 1:10:55. **Serena Burla** (Ballwin, Mo.) and **Heidi Westover** (Walpole, N.H.) are seeded fourth and fifth, respectively.

Houston is also home to the men's national half marathon championship race, hosting the event for the sixth year in a row. The race is shaping up as a breakthrough opportunity for a number of up-and-coming runners. James Carney, who won the race in 2008, was selected as the top seed, but was forced to drop out of the race due to injury. **Josh Rohatinsky** (Portland, Ore.), **Tim Nelson** (Portland, Ore.), **Antonio Vega** (Minneapolis, Minn.), **Josh Moen** (Minneapolis, Minn.) and **Patrick Smyth** (Minneapolis, Minn.) are now the highest seeds in the race.

Nearly \$60,000 in prize money is at stake in the USA championship races, with a first-place award of \$12,000 going to both the men's and women's winners.



Including the companion EP5K, more than 26,000 runners are participating in the three 2010 Chevron Houston Marathon Weekend events. The competition begins Sunday at 6:45 a.m. with the wheelchair start for the marathon and half marathon.

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 20 foreign countries. In 2009, more than 26,000 runners participated in four marathon weekend events (marathon, half marathon, 5K run and children's run). The Houston Marathon has been ranked among the top five in the nation by *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 at www.chevronhoustonmarathon.com or 713-957-3453.

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