

Ethiopians Teshome Gelana, Teyba Erkesso Win 2010 Chevron Houston Marathon in Course Record Times

Shalane Flanagan debuts in course-record fashion at USA Half Marathon Championships

HOUSTON (Jan. 17, 2010) – **Teshome Gelana** and defending women's champion **Teyba Erkesso** led an Ethiopian sweep of the 2010 Chevron Houston Marathon, each setting course records in the process.

Gelana, 25, running his second marathon in six weeks, broke away from a pack of five runners at the 22-mile mark and finished in 2:07:37. His time shaved 15 seconds off the previous course record set by fellow Ethiopian Deriba Merga last year.

"I did not expect to run this fast," said Gelana, who entered the race with a personal record of 2:11:50 set in 2008. "It was unexpected, but I hope the future will bring even more interesting things for me. I think I can run 2:05."

Zembaba Yigeze (ETH) was second in 2:08:27, while **Jason Mbote** (KEN) was third in 2:08:58. For the first time in the history of the race, the top six runners ran under 2 hours, 10 minutes. American **Brett Gotcher** (Flagstaff, Ariz.) finished seventh in 2:10:35 in his debut marathon.

The 27-year-old Erkesso dominated the women's race for the second consecutive year, once again crossing the finish line in a course record. Erkesso won by nearly five minutes, lowering her course mark by 25 seconds with a time of 2:23:53. The time is the fastest female marathon ever run in Texas and makes Erkesso the only woman to run sub 2 hours, 25 minutes twice in Houston.

Both Galana and Erkesso received \$35,000 for their victories. **Margarita Plaksina** (RUS) was the runner-up in the women's race in 2:28:44. **Alemitu Abera** (ETH) was third in 2:31:01.

Antonio Vega (St. Paul, Minn.) and **Shalane Flanagan** (Portland, Ore.) claimed 2010 USA Half Marathon Championships with their victories in the Aramco Houston Half Marathon.

Vega, 26, broke the tape in 1:01:54, setting a new personal best by more than a minute and running the fourth-fastest time by American on the Houston half marathon course. The victory produced Vega's first national road title. **Patrick Smyth** (Minneapolis, Minn.) was seven seconds behind in second place, while **Brent Vaughn** (Black Hawk, Colo.) ran 1:02:04 for third.

Two-time Olympian Flanagan, 28, shattered the course record in the women's half marathon championship, finishing in 1:09:41. The time bettered the mark set by Colleen De Reuck in 2004 by 1:14.

"It felt like just another day, just another practice. It wasn't until the last 400 meters did I say 'okay, this is a race and I need to make sure I seal the deal,'" said Flanagan, who has her long-term sights set on the marathon. "It was a very good effort, very controlled and it was just a great day for running."

An event record of more than 26,000 runners participated in the 38th running of the Chevron Houston Marathon, the ninth-annual Aramco Houston Half Marathon and EP5K.

The record number of runners is expected to result in a new standard for money raised by the Run for a Reason charity program. Prior to the race, runners already had raised \$1.4 million to benefit 46 Houston-area nonprofit organizations.

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 many foreign countries. In 2010, more than 30,000 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 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.

For more information, visit www.chevronhoustonmarathon.com or call 713-957-3453.

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