

Media Advisory

For Immediate Release

Contact:
Muffy King
Houston Marathon Committee, Inc.
713.957.3453
Muffy@houstonmarathon.com



2018 Press Conference Recap

HOUSTON (January 12, 2018) – At the Chevron Houston Marathon and Aramco Houston Half Marathon on Sunday, the 11,037 in the marathon and 16,207 in the half marathon are expected to be greeted at the 7 a.m. start by a temperature of 36 degrees F (2 C), humidity of 60 percent, winds of 5 mph and a zero percent chance of humidity.

“A day like Sunday is why fast runners come to Houston,” said Sarah Crouch, the top-seeded American woman in the marathon. “This is the kind of weather that is absolutely perfect.”

And a race that is especially important this year, after Hurricane Harvey devastated parts of Houston in August. The boost to the city is coming “just at the right time,” said Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner in his remarks at the pre-race press conference Friday morning. With thousands of its citizens still trying to recover, he said, “you have to give everyone something to cheer about. This one is special.”

“Somewhere in the neighborhood of 250,000 fans are expected to line the course,” said Wade Morehead, Houston Marathon Committee executive director, “cheering on runners who will help the Run for a Reason charity program hit \$28 million in total funds raised since it began in 1995.” The races are the largest single-day sporting event in the city.

Leading the Chevron Houston Marathon field, is returning 2017 champion Dominic Ondoro of Kenya will attempt to defend his title against two-time winner Bazu Worku of Ethiopia, whose 2:05:25 personal best is the fastest in the field. For the women, Veronicah Wanjiru—last year’s half marathon winner here—will make her 26.2-mile debut as one of the favorites in the marathon, along with 2016 champion Biruktayit Degefa and 2012 half marathon winner Belaynesh Olijira. First place for both men and women is worth \$45,000.

Meanwhile, both the men’s and women’s fields in the Aramco Houston Half Marathon are the fastest and deepest in the history of the race, and possibly ever in the U.S. Both race records (59:22 for the men, 1:06:29 for the women) may be in jeopardy, thanks to fields led by Alex Korio of Kenya (58:51, making him the eighth-fastest marathoner in history) and Kenyan Edith Chelimo (1:05:52, the seventh-fastest woman in history). First prize is worth \$20,000, with time and record bonuses also in play.

On the men’s side, five athletes have half-marathon personal bests under 60 minutes. In addition to Korio, they include:

- Guye Adola of Ethiopia, whose 2:03:46 runner-up finish in last fall’s Berlin Marathon was the fastest marathon debut in history (59:06);

- Daniel Wanjiru of Kenya, the 2017 London Marathon champion (59:20);
- Feyisa Lelisa of Ethiopia, the 2016 Olympic silver medalist in the marathon who is seeking to become the race's first three-time winner here (59:22);
- Justus Kangogo of Kenya, just 23 years old (59:31).

The women's field features six women with personal bests under 1:09. Chelimo will be joined by:

- Eunice Chumba of Bahrain, who along with Chelimo will be making her U.S. debut (1:06:11);
- Mary Wacera of Kenya, whose personal best set here in 2016 in the fastest half marathon ever run on U.S. soil (1:06:29);
- Helah Kiprop, the 2015 IAAF World Championship silver medalist in the marathon (1:07:39);
- American Molly Huddle, a 25-time national champion and two-time Olympian (1:07:41);
- American Jordan Hasay, whose 1:08:40 here last year was the second-fastest American debut at the distance (1:07:55).

Both Huddle and Hasay will have Deena Kastor's American record of 1:07:34, set in 2002, in their sights.

"Records never go down when you're just out there to get the record," said Hasay. "It's cool, because we're just out there competing with the other women, and maybe it will go down."

About the Houston Marathon Committee, Inc.

Established in 1972, the Houston Marathon Committee, Inc. (HMC) is a founding member of Running USA and annually organizes the nation's premier winter marathon, half marathon and 5K. Over 250,000 participants, volunteers and spectators make Chevron Houston Marathon Race Day the largest single-day sporting event in Houston. Recognized by the IAAF, the Gold Label Aramco Houston Half Marathon has held 16 U.S. Half Marathon Championships and the Silver Label Chevron Houston Marathon has been the race site for three U.S. Olympic Trials Marathons. For five consecutive years, the events have garnered Gold Certification from the Council of Responsible Sport and were also awarded the 2015 AIMS Green Award for industry-leading sustainability initiatives. Race weekend generates over \$50 million in economic impact for the region annually. In addition to its economic impact, the HMC facilitates social responsibility through its Run for a Reason Charity Program which has raised over \$27 million since its inception and the Houston Marathon Foundation, which serves the greater Houston area through support of youth and community organizations that promote access to and participation in running. The event is televised annually with 2016 being the first time the race received national and international syndication airing on ESPN3 and the Longhorn Network.

For more information, visit www.chevronhoustonmarathon.com or call 713.957.3453.