



News

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JOHN HANCOCK FINANCIAL ANNOUNCES TOP CONTENDERS FOR 2009 BOSTON MARATHON

*2008 Chicago Winners, Olympians, and Additional Talent Join the Elite Team to
Challenge Defending Champions*

BOSTON, MA, February 19, 2009— John Hancock Financial today announced that the top contenders for the Boston Marathon this year include an elite group of Olympians, top Americans and international marathon winners. These athletes will challenge four-time winner Robert Kipkoech Cheruiyot of Kenya and defending women's champion Dire Tune of Ethiopia at the 113th running of the race on April 20.

The top male contenders include 2008 Chicago champion Evans Cheruiyot of Kenya, Olympian and 2009 Houston winner Deriba Merga of Ethiopia, and top American and Olympian Ryan Hall.

Evans Cheruiyot ran to a 2:06:25 commanding lead in an unseasonably hot Chicago this past fall and in 2007 won the Milan City Marathon in his debut.

Merga shattered the 20-year-old Houston course record by more than two minutes in January, and he placed fourth in the Beijing Olympic Marathon.

Hall's efforts last year included a 2:06:17 run in London and a tenth place in the Olympic Marathon. He is the American half-marathoner record holder and currently the fastest American marathoner.

Added to John Hancock's elite team and chasing the trio are Daniel Rono of Kenya, with seven top-three finishes in international marathons, including third in New York City last year; Robert Kiprono (Cheruiyot) of Kenya, who debuted last year with a 2:07:21 course record in Frankfurt and Gashaw Asfaw of Ethiopia, who was first in Shanghai, seventh at the Olympic Marathon and fourth in Boston in 2008.

American Olympian Brian Sell will also challenge, as will American Jason Lehmkuhle. Sell has experience in Boston, having finished fourth in 2006, and Lehmkuhle brings potential with a fifth at the U.S. Olympic Marathon Trials.

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Additional men returning with experience are 2004 Boston champion Timothy Cherigat and 2007 third place finisher Stephen Kiohora, both of Kenya. Newcomers on the course include 2008 JoongAng Seoul Marathon winner Solomon Molla of Ethiopia, Lee Troop of Australia, and debut marathoner Abebe Dinkesa of Ethiopia.

In the women's race, defending champion Dire Tune of Ethiopia will face 2008 Chicago and 2007 Boston champion Lidiya Grigoryeva of Russia, as well as her teammates Galina Bogolomova, the Russian national record holder (2:20:47), and Olympic steeplechaser and World Championships silver medalist Tatyana Petrova.

Also in contention for the win are 2009 Dubai winner Bezunesh Bekele of Ethiopia, seasoned marathoner and Olympian Salina Kosgei of Kenya, and leading American Kara Goucher. In New York City this past fall, Goucher ran the fastest American debut of all time recording a 2:25:53 over the challenging course. She also competed in both the 5,000 and 10,000 meters at the Beijing Olympic Games, finishing ninth and tenth respectively.

Chasing these women are Helena Kirop of Kenya, third in Berlin the past two years; Atsedo Habtamu of Ethiopia, runner up in her debut in Dubai this year; Alice Timbilili of Kenya and American and two-time Olympian Elva Dryer.

John Hancock, now in its 24th year as the major sponsor of the Boston Marathon, will announce its complete international elite team in March.

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