



2014 PUBLIX GASPARILLA HALF MARATHON ELITE FIELD AIMS FOR OLYMPIC TRIALS

February 5, 2014 - Tampa - The Gasparilla Distance Classic Association announced today that the road to the 2016 U.S. Olympic Marathon Trials will pass through Tampa later this month, when during the 2014 Publix Gasparilla Half Marathon, a talented field of American male and female distance runners could be attempting to qualify.

Led by two-time men's Olympian Abdi Abdirahman and three-time women's qualifier Jen Rhimes, more than a dozen elite-level runners will take to the streets of Tampa on February 23, some of whom will be seeking to achieve the Olympic Trials' qualifying standard.

To add even more excitement to this year's Publix Gasparilla Distance Classic Race Weekend (Feb. 21 - 23), as well as to help U.S. athletes focus on their training for the Trials, a total of \$40,000 in Prize Money is up for grabs in this year's Publix Gasparilla Half Marathon.

"We're thrilled to bring elite racing back to the streets of Tampa," said Susan Harmeling, Executive Director. "The city's biggest running weekend already offers an incredible air of excitement and distance for every age and fitness level. The increased excitement surrounding the American elites, their goals and dreams, will be a gift to our participants and the Tampa Bay community."

The top five American male and female finishers in the Publix Gasparilla Half Marathon will divvy up a sum of \$30,000, with the winners taking home \$8,000 each. Not forgetting the event's deep roots in the Tampa Bay community, Gasparilla's "American Development and Local Prize Purse," also features \$10,000 for the best local runners in the Half Marathon, with the top finishers earning \$2,000 each.

The Publix Gasparilla Distance Classic 15K, scheduled for Feb. 22, will continue to offer cash awards for the top local runners. For the first five local men and women, a total purse of \$10,000 is on the line in the 15K race.

As has been the case in recent U.S. Olympic Marathon Trials, runners can achieve the qualifying standards by meeting certain time performances in the Half Marathon. For the men, they must cover a certified 13.1-mile course in 1 hour, 5 minutes or faster. On the women's side, the Trials' qualifying standard is 1:15 or better.

For the eight men and eight women confirmed for the Publix Gasparilla Half Marathon elite field, those standards are no major obstacle. All of them own Personal Bests eclipsing the Trials' standards, as well as marathon bests that would meet the "A" standard for that distance.

Adbirahman, a native of Somalia who became a U.S. citizen in 2000, enters Gasparilla with a sizzling Half Marathon best of 1:00:29. He competed in the 2000 and 2004 Summer Olympics at 10,000 meters and has run the marathon in 2:08. Rhines, who has competed in the 5000, 10,000 and marathon over three different Olympic Games, owns a Half Marathon Personal Record of 1:11:14 and a marathon PR of 2:29:32

Another invited runner in this year's field includes former Tampa Berkley Prep and Stanford University star Rolf Steier, who has based his training in Oslo, Norway, while studying for his Ph.D. Like others in the field, he will be seeking to meet the Trials standard, a window that opened Aug. 1, 2013.

Defending Publix Gasparilla Half Marathon champions Jonathan Mott and Terri Rejimbai have also confirmed that they will return for the race.

With this type of professional field assembled in Tampa - the first since 1997, when race officials opted to drop elite prize money - there's little doubt that the race's Half Marathon course records of 1:09:50 (Mott) and 1:20:06 (Jessica Crate) will be shattered at this year's race.

"Yes, the Half Marathon Course Records will most certainly be broken," added Harmeling. "But, we will never lose sight of those that have come before and through dedication and training, have blazed the trail down Bayshore Boulevard."

Confirmed Publix Gasparilla Half Marathon Elite Field (as of 02.04.14):

Men:

- Shadrack Biwott: <http://www.all-athletics.com/node/54930>
- Abdi Abdirahman: <http://www.all-athletics.com/node/77314>
- Fernando Cabada: <http://www.all-athletics.com/node/80443>
- Ryan Vail: <http://www.all-athletics.com/node/100119>
- Tyler McCandless: <http://www.all-athletics.com/node/91722>
- Carlos Trujillo: <http://www.all-athletics.com/node/99911>
- Jeff Eggleston: <http://www.all-athletics.com/node/83552>
- Patrick Rizzo: <http://www.all-athletics.com/node/96067>
- Bobby Curtis: <http://www.all-athletics.com/node/176340>

Women:

- Jen Rhines: <http://www.all-athletics.com/node/166185>
- Adriana Nelson: <http://www.all-athletics.com/node/100119>
- Lindsey Scherf: <http://www.all-athletics.com/node/167100>
- Mattie Suver: <http://www.all-athletics.com/node/152816>
- Tera Moody: <http://www.all-athletics.com/node/152816>
- Wendy Thomas: <http://www.all-athletics.com/node/355657>
- Stephanie Pezzullo: <http://www.all-athletics.com/node/165299>
- Caroline Bierbaum Lefrak: <http://www.all-athletics.com/node/152239>