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Reporters May Contact:

Jeremy Borling, Bank of America Chicago Marathon, 1.312.446.0183
jeremy.borling@bankofamerica.com

Diane Wagner, Bank of America, 1.312.952.1756
diane.wagner@bankofamerica.com

Lauren Wood, TeamWorks Media, 1.858.337.1360
lauren@teamworksmedia.com

Kebede's Course Record and Thrilling Women's Finish Highlight 35th Running of the Bank of America Chicago Marathon

Ethiopians Dominate the Podium with Sweep of Men's Race and Women's Victory

CHICAGO —Today's 35th running of the Bank of America Chicago Marathon witnessed historic performances by men's champion Tsegaye Kebede and women's champion Atsede Baysa, both of Ethiopia, as an event record 37,455 participants crossed the finish line under cool conditions in Grant Park. Kebede's time of 2:04:38 broke the previous course record by nearly a minute, while Baysa's one-second margin of victory over Rita Jeptoo of Kenya in the closest women's finish in race history.

"I can't think of a better way to celebrate the Bank of America Chicago Marathon's 35th year than by rewriting the record books," said Executive Race Director Carey Pinkowski. "Tsegaye took advantage of great racing conditions and stiff competition to smash the course record, and Atsede and Rita treated us to a spirited battle all the way to the finish tape. Their performances set the pace for a wonderful day of marathon running in Chicago, and it's my pleasure to congratulate all race finishers, and to thank our volunteers, city partners, and sponsors who help make this event possible."

With a start time temperature of 42 degrees and light winds, the lead men's pack of 12 runners reached the halfway point in 1:02:54. At 25K, Kebede forged to the lead and the race was on. Along with fellow Ethiopians Tilahun Regassa and Feyisa Lilesa, they attacked the second half, putting the course record in jeopardy. But Kebede was a man on a mission, and the 2010 Chicago runner-up advanced to the top of the podium in style, blazing the last 13.1 miles in 1:01:44 en route to victory. Not only was Kebede's win the first by an Ethiopian male in Chicago, but he was followed across the line by Lilesa (2:04:38) and Regassa (2:05:27) for an Ethiopian sweep, all three bettering the previous record of 2:05:37 set by Kenya's Moses Mosop in 2011. Michigan native Dathan Ritzenhein was the top U.S. finisher in ninth, establishing a more than two-minute personal best of 2:07:47 and becoming the third fastest American of all time.

In the women's race, three-time defending champion Liliya Shobukhova's reign came to an end as she was fourth in a race where the top four finished under 2:23. Shobukhova ran in a pack of nine that covered the first half in 1:11:15, before she fell five seconds behind the leaders at 30K. Also trailing was Ethiopia's Atsede Baysa, who then surged to catch the pack by 35K. Over the final miles, it was a three-woman race between Baysa and Kenyans Rita Jeptoo and Lucy Kabuu. Baysa and Jeptoo battled all the way to the tape in the closest women's finish in race

history. In the end, only one second separated the two with Baysa edging Jeptoo, 2:22:03 to 2:22:04, both personal bests. Kabuu was third in 2:22:41. Oregon's Renee Metivier Baillie, running her debut marathon, was the top American in eighth with a 2:27:17.

In the wheelchair race, defending women's champion Tatyana McFadden of Champaign, Ill., returned to the winner's circle with a powerful performance, winning by more than six minutes in 1:49:52. In the men's race, last year's fourth-place finisher, Canada's Josh Cassidy, moved up to the top spot on the podium, besting Adam Bleakney of Champaign, Ill., 1:32:58 to 1:34:23.

The fourth annual Nike Northside/Southside Challenge featured the area's top high school cross country athletes competing in a unique race that covers the final 2.62 miles of the Bank of America Chicago Marathon course. In the boys' race, Pat McMahon of Carl Sandburg High School finished first in 13:07. In the girls' race, Carly Krull, also of Carl Sandburg High School, won in 15:18. In the team challenge, the Northside squad captured the title over the Southside team.

About the 2012 Bank of America Chicago Marathon

Celebrating its 35th year and a member of the World Marathon Majors, the Bank of America Chicago Marathon annually attracts 45,000 participants, including a world-class elite runner and wheelchair field, and an estimated 1.7 million spectators. As a result of its national and international draw, each year, the iconic race assists in raising millions of dollars for a variety of charitable causes while generating \$219 million in economic impact to its host city in 2011 according to a report by the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign's Regional Economics Applications Laboratory (R.E.A.L.).

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