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FORMER CHAMPIONS HIGHLIGHT STRONG 2023 GRANDMA'S MARATHON FIELD

US Olympic Trials Hopefuls Descend on Duluth

(DULUTH, MINN.) --- Several former champions will return to this year's Grandma's Marathon, highlighting a field that's expected to include some of the best American distance runners ahead of next year's U.S. Olympic Trials.

GRANDMA'S MARATHON

Defending champion and event record holder Dominic Ondoro returns on the men's side, that after winning his second Grandma's Marathon last summer. He's joined by countrymen and former champions themselves, Milton Rotich and Elisha Barno.

Ondoro, who broke Dick Beardsley's longtime event record with his winning run in 2014, will be trying to become just the second man to win three or more Grandma's Marathons. The only to have done it so far is Barno, who won four straight titles from 2015-18.

NOTE: Elisha Barno will be officially inducted on Friday, June 16 into the Grandma's Marathon Hall of Fame as part of the Class of 2023, making him the first athlete inducted since 2017.

Kevin Lynch not only leads a pack of American men aiming to qualify for the U.S. Olympic Trials, but is also hoping to become the first American men's winner of Grandma's Marathon since Chris Raabe did it in 2009.

Minnesotan and fan favorite Dakotah Lindwurm returns on the women's side as a favorite to win her third-straight Grandma's Marathon, which would make her the third woman to accomplish that feat.

New Zealand's Lorraine Moller won three straight women's races from 1979-81, and American Mary Akor then did it from 2007-09.



Lindwurm's personal record of 2:25:01, which she ran in last year's winning effort at Grandma's Marathon, is more than four minutes better than any other woman in the field, though Gabriella Rooker is back this year after finishing 10th place last summer in her Duluth debut.

GRANDMA'S MARATHON WHEELCHAIR

Aaron Pike returns to Duluth and Grandma's Marathon this year in the men's wheelchair division, that after winning for a fourth time and breaking his own event record.

Pike had owned the record since 2019, but he broke his own mark with a finishing time of 1:20:02 that was nearly a minute faster. He does, however, still have a ways to go to own the overall wins record – Belgium's Paul Van Winkel has eight and Mexico's Saul Mendoza has seven.

Jenna Fesemyer, meanwhile, leads a smaller-than-normal women's wheelchair field and will be looking to improve on a runner-up finish from a year ago. Former champion Ivonne Reyes is also back this year, as is last year's fourth-place finisher Michelle Wheeler.

GARRY BJORKLUND HALF MARATHON

Neither the men's or the women's defending champion is back in the Garry Bjorklund Half Marathon, but 2016 winner Macdonard Ondara is back this year for his fourth run in Duluth. He will lead a strong group of returners on the men's side, with each of the top five runners having been here before.

Garry Bjorklund Half Marathon rookie Lydia Mathathi leads things on the women's side, and the Kenyan's personal best is a time that, if repeated, would break the storied mark of Duluth native Kara Goucher. Followed by four Americans who are also making their debut in Duluth, Mathathi would be the first Kenyan to win this race since Monicah Ngige in 2018.

NON-BINARY RACE CATEGORY

Participants can register and compete in the non-binary category for a second straight year at the Grandma's Marathon weekend, and 2023 will also bring prize money to that category for the first time.

The top three non-binary runners in both Grandma's Marathon and the Garry Bjorklund Half Marathon will receive prize money this year, marking another step forward in the ongoing diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts of the organization.

For any questions or interview requests, please contact Marketing & Public Relations Director Zach Schneider via phone at (218) 343-9874 or via email at zach@grandmasmarathon.com.

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ABOUT GRANDMA'S MARATHON

Grandma's Marathon began in 1977 when a group of local runners planned a scenic road race from Two Harbors to Duluth, Minnesota. After seeing just 150 participants that year, the race weekend has now grown into one of the largest in the United States and welcomes more than 20,000 participants for its three-race event each June.



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The race got its name from the Duluth-based group of famous Grandma's Restaurants, the first major sponsor of the marathon. In addition to the 26.2-mile race, the organization has now added the Garry Bjorklund Half Marathon and William A. Irvin 5K to its weekend offerings.

As the popularity of Grandma's Marathon has grown, our mission has stayed the same – to organize, promote, and deliver annual events and programs that cultivate running, educational, social, and charitable opportunities to our communities.

Grandma's Marathon-Duluth, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt nonprofit organization with a nine-person, full-time staff and a 17-member Board of Directors.



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