



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Zach Schneider  
Marketing & Public Relations Director  
[zach@grandmasmarathon.com](mailto:zach@grandmasmarathon.com)  
(218) 727-0947

# AMONG A FIELD OF FAVORITES, FIRST TIMERS RULE THE DAY AT 2026 GARRY BJORKLUND HALF MARATHON

*Iverson, Parker Fend Off Past Champions to Win in Duluth*

**(DULUTH, MINN.)** – Almost none of the pre-race chatter about the elite competitors at the 36<sup>th</sup> annual Garry Bjorklund Half Marathon centered on Acer Iverson and Kasandra Parker, but all the post-race discussion will.

Those two fought off fields full of past champions, former Olympians, and other top contenders, each winning for the first time at this year's Garry Bjorklund Half Marathon.

Iverson, who ran this race as a 14-year-old, outbattled pre-race favorite and 2020 US Olympian Joe Klecker and some of the race analyst's favorite "dark horse," Aidan Reed, to capture the title with a time of 1:01:15.

A native of Roseville, Minn., Iverson says he has family in the area and considers the Duluth area somewhat of a second home.

"I'm on top of the world," said Iverson, who spent most of the race in a three-way battle for the lead with Klecker and Reed before pulling away in the final mile.

Reed was the runner-up with a time of 1:01:26, while Klecker was third with a time of 1:01:56. Finishing sixth was past Grandma's Marathon and Garry Bjorklund Half Marathon champion Joel Reichow.

Parker, meanwhile, continued an amazing run this calendar year with a victory in her debut at the Garry Bjorklund Half Marathon. She won with a time of 1:10:16; that's after a win at this year's Naples Half Marathon and a fourth-place finish at this year's Atlanta Half Marathon.

"I knew I wanted to run a [personal record]," Parker said. "I was comfortable with what I needed to do, what times I need to run."



Parker led most of the way during the race, including in the early miles when two-time defending champion Annie Frisbie was forced to drop from the race and end her bid at a three-peat.

Madey Dickson was the runner-up with a time of 1:11:35, while Rebecca Schmitt finished in third place with a time of 1:12:11.

In the non-binary division, Joe Morris was this year's champion with a time of 1:50:21.

A total of 7,832 people crossed the finish line in the 2026 Garry Bjorklund Half Marathon – 2,988 men, 4,820 women, and 18 non-binary – making it the third-largest year in the event's history.

Full results of the 2026 Garry Bjorklund Half Marathon can be found [HERE](#).

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](mailto:zach@grandmasmarathon.com).

###

#### ABOUT GRANDMA'S MARATHON

Started by a local group of runners in 1977, Grandma's Marathon has grown from just 150 participants its first year to now one of the largest and best-known marathons in the United States. Widely regarded as a world class event with small town charm, our race has now added the Garry Bjorklund Half Marathon and William A. Irvin 5K to its weekend offerings.

With all three races combined, our race weekend welcomes more than 20,000 participants – usually from all 50 states and from 70+ different countries – and brings with it close to \$40M of economic impact to the region.

The race got its name from the Duluth-based group of famous Grandma's Restaurants, the first major sponsor of the marathon. As the popularity of Grandma's Marathon weekend 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 10-person, full-time staff and a 17-member Board of Directors.



Advantage Embroidery & Screen Printing | Anderson's Maple Syrup | Black Woods Grill & Bar | Circle K | Cirrus Aircraft | City of Duluth | CM2 Supply  
Country Hearth Natural Breads | Dasani | Duluth Economic Development Authority | Duluth News Tribune | Essentia Health | Grand Casino Hinkley/Mille Lacs  
Grandma's Restaurant Co. | Holiday Inn & Suites | Jamar | maurices | Michelina's | Michelob Ultra | Minnesota Pork Board | Minnesota Power/ALLETE  
Napa Auto Parts | Northland FAN 106.5 | Powerade ION4 | Storm Creek | Stryker | Super One Foods | WM | WDIO/WIRT-TV