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JOHN KORIR RETURNS TO DEFEND TITLE Bloomsday Champion Aims for Fourth Win

Spokane, WA—John Korir of Kenya is the only three-time men's champion in Bloomsday history, and this Sunday he returns to Spokane hoping to add a fourth title to his impressive road racing resume. Korir's previous titles came in 2003, 2005 and 2007, and a win in Bloomsday '08 would give him bragging rights as the greatest champion in Bloomsday history.

“John Korir is a great competitor,” said Jon Neill, Bloomsday Elite Athlete Coordinator. “He knows the course well and is the clear favorite coming into this year's race. But he'll be running against a formidable field, so he'll have to be on top of his game to notch that fourth victory.”

This year's elite field includes Bloomsday 2006 champion Gilbert Okari of Kenya, who was slated for a match-up with Korir in 2007 until he had to scratch from the race one day prior to the race due to injury. Okari's 34:14 finish in 2006 ranks 9th all-time on Bloomsday's list of fastest finishes. Korir ran 34:18 in 2007 – 12th all-time.

Okari and Korir will have a great matchup, but they'll also have their hands full with other notable competitors, including Micah Kogo (Kenya) and Dieudonne Disi (Rwanda). Kogo was the #2 ranked Running Times Road Racer of the Year in 2007, and ran 27:29 in the 2008 Brunssum Parelloop 10K on April 6th. Disi's resume includes a sixth place finish in the 2007 World Half Marathon championships, where he clocked 59:32. In addition to Kogo and Disi, Bloomsday 2007 2nd and 3rd place finishers, John Yuda (Tanzania) and Julius Kibet Koskei (Kenya), return and figure to be in the hunt for the title.

The strong men's field also includes Nicholas Kamakya (Kenya) and Riduane Harroufi (Morocco), who are vying for the Professional Road Running Organization (PRRO) Championship Circuit bonus of \$30,000. To be eligible for the bonus, a runner must win two of the circuit races and also the Peachtree Road Race on July 4, 2008 in Atlanta, Georgia. The circuit races are the 2007 Utica Boilermaker 15K, the 2008 World's Best 10K, the 2008 Cherry Blossom

10 Miler, and the 2008 Lilac Bloomsday Run. Kamakya, winner of the Boilermaker, and Harroufi, winner of the Cherry Blossom, need a victory at Bloomsday for a chance to win the \$30,000 PRRO bonus at Peachtree.

The 2008 Bloomsday men's elite field will feature athletes who have run five of the ten fastest road 10K times in the world for 2008. Included in that list are Kenyans Micah Kogo; Moses Kigen (27:44), champion of the 2008 Crescent City Classic 10K and 2008 Azalea Trail Run 10K; Robert Letting (27:45), winner of the 2008 Cooper Bridge Run 10K; George Kirwa Misoi (27:48); and Linus Maiyo (27:52).

For the women's field, a new Bloomsday champion will be crowned, as last year's champion, Edna Kiplagat, will not compete. With the title up for grabs, Catherine Ndereba, 2007 World Marathon champion and 4-time Boston Marathon winner, will be one of two returning Bloomsday money winners from 2007. Her participation in Bloomsday comes on the heels of the Kenyan federation's April 23rd announcement that Ndereba will represent Kenya in the Olympic marathon. Ndereba placed 4th at Bloomsday last year in a time of 39:57.

Along with Ndereba, Genoveva Kigen of Kenya is expected to challenge for the victory on Sunday. Kigen's victories this year include the Azalea Trail Run 10K and the Crescent City Classic, and she also ran an impressive 15:41 at the Carlsbad 5000, where she finished 3rd.

"Genoveva's performances from this spring," noted Jon Neill, "along with her sizeable margins of victory in the races she won, show that she is coming to Bloomsday ready to challenge for the title."

Cherry Blossom 10 Mile Champion Lineth Chepkurui is the most likely challenger for Kigen and Ndereba. Bloomsday will mark the first time Chepkurui and Kigen have faced one another in 2008. Chepkurui placed 12th at the 2008 World Cross Country Championships held in late March. In addition, Ethiopian Genet Gebregiorgis, who is fresh off a first place finish at the Vancouver Sun Run, will also be a front-runner, as well as Kenyans Angelina Mutuku and Millicent Gathoni.

In the masters field, Bloomsday 1996 and 2002 champion Colleen De Reuck of Boulder, Colorado will be tough to beat. On April 26th De Reuck ran a 34:17 to earn the title of the 2008 USA Masters 10K Champion.

This year's wheelchair competition also promises to be hotly contested, as 2007 winners Saul Mendoza of Mexico and Amanda McGrory return to defend their titles. In addition, Bloomsday this year will host the second annual collegiate team competition, with strong wheelchair fields from the University of Illinois and University of Arizona vying for the team victory. Each team will be scored based on its top two male and top two female finishers, plus one quad competitor. Last year the University of Illinois won the inaugural title.

While elite athletes are vying for top placings and over \$56,000 in prize money, over 47,000 runners, joggers and walkers are expected for the 12-kilometer trek, an increase of 3,000 over last year. There will be twenty-six entertainment stations along the course, and participants will be able to vote for their favorite performers by logging on to the Bloomsday website after the run. Entrants will also spend a fair amount of time during the run wondering what the 2008 Bloomsday T-shirt will look like. The color and design of the shirt are kept secret until entrants reach the finish.

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