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Limo and Langat Top Seeds at 40th Lilac Bloomsday Run

Women's Sprint Finish and New Men's Champion Expected

Spokane, Washington—A sprint finish is what spectators hope for and race directors dream about, and this year's women's field for the 40th edition of the Lilac Bloomsday Run is looking like that's exactly what might happen. Returning women's champion Cynthia Limo, described by elite athlete coordinator Jon Neill as "the most dominant female distance runner in the world right now," is back to defend her title from 2015. Limo is coming off a 2nd place finish at the 2016 IAAF Half Marathon Championships, where she ran 1:06:04—the 2nd fastest half marathon in the world this year and the 4th fastest in history.

Limo will be challenged over the 12-kilometer course by training partner Monicah Ngige, who is clearly in top shape, having just finished 10th at the Kenyan Cross Country Nationals and 5th at the World's Best 10K in Puerto Rico (31:58), and Risa Takenaka, the first Japanese runner to race Bloomsday in 14 years. Americans Mattie Suver and Blake Russell will be the leaders in the battle for the American prize money.

In the men's race, a new champion will be crowned on Sunday, as last year's winner, Lani Rutto, won't be returning. Philip Langat comes in as the top seed after finishing 4th at Bloomsday last year. Earlier this year he recorded a 4th place finish at the World's Best 10K, where his time was the 6th fastest 10K in the world this year. Langat will have to contend with last year's 3rd place finisher, Issac Mwangi, and the youngster, 19-year-old John Muritu, 8th at Bloomsday 2015.

"Langat is coming in with a blazing fast 10K this year," said Jon Neill, "But it may be the 19-year-old Muritu, who has shown that he's ready to race after notching two Crescent City Classic 10K titles, who upstages the more experienced Kenyan and the rest of the field."

Langat and Muritu should also be challenged by top-seeded Americans Patrick Smyth, Jeffrey Eggleston and Bellingham, Washington product Jake Riley, who was an All-American in track and cross country at Stanford.

Each year brings intriguing twists when it comes to the wheelchair field. This year the complexion of the field is influenced by the upcoming summer Paralympic Games in Brazil. Bloomsday welcomes 5 former Paralympians, 12 World Championship athletes, and 6 ParaPan Am athletes. 13 of this year's Bloomsday athletes have been invited to the USA Track and Field Trials in Charlotte in June, hoping to punch their tickets to Rio.

On the women's side, former champion and local superstar Susannah Scaroni will be back and chasing the course record. Scaroni did the Tekoa and Spokane communities proud with a 4th place finish 2 weeks ago at the Boston Marathon (1:46:53), following up with a 7th place last week at the London Marathon. Expect the hometown favorite to go for her 3rd Bloomsday victory.

“And don’t for a minute think that Tatyana McFadden’s course record of 30:42 is safe,” said Wheelchair Coordinator Bob Murphy.

In the men’s wheelchair race, Laurens Molina, who finished 12th at the London Marathon last week, and James Senbeta, the top American and 5th overall two weeks ago at the Boston Marathon, will likely spar for the win. Both have been to Bloomsday before but neither has broken the tape. Two athletes from Ghana—MacLean Atsu Dzidzienyo and Raphael Botsyo Nkegbe—will join Molina and Senbeta in the lead group. In the Quad 52 division, 11-time champion Santiago Sanz looks to add an impressive 12th title to his resume.

Nearly \$100,000 in prize money is offered in the 2016 Lilac Bloomsday Run, including a \$10,000 purse (\$5,000 - \$2,500 - \$1,250 - \$750 - \$500) for the top male and female Americans who finish in the top 25. The Lilac Bloomsday Run is the fifth race in the PRRO Circuit of major U.S. road races. Drug testing of top competitors is conducted at all PRRO Circuit events in partnership with the US Anti-Doping Agency (USADA).

A field of nearly 47,000 runners and walkers are expected to have entered by the time registration closes on Saturday evening. Procrastinators will have until 6:30 on Saturday to sign up.

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