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THE SAN FRANCISCO MARATHON™ ATTRACTS LOCAL AND WORLDWIDE PARTICIPATION

Soldiers in Afghanistan Will Also Compete in Sunday, August 3 Race

SAN FRANCISCO, Calif. - (July 24, 2008) - When over 19,000 entrants line up for The San Francisco Marathon™ and its companion two half marathons and 5K Run/Walk on Sunday, August 3, San Francisco attorney Tony Rossmann won't be among them. The 67-year-old, longtime Bay Area runner from Oakland has already run his 26.2-mile marathon race over the event's scenic route. In fact, motivated by special "solo runner" status provided by the marathon's organizers, Rossmann completed his annual San Francisco Marathon run a month ago for the 30th time, keeping his unique, annual streak alive.

Neither will four members of the U.S. military stationed in Afghanistan line up at the marathon's starting line on race day. Although they'd like to join runners from all 50 states and 56 countries in San Francisco, the soldiers have jobs fighting Taliban insurgents along the Pakistan border. Instead, led by Loren Weeks (Sunnyvale, Calif.), a Lieutenant Colonel in the California Army National Guard, they will run the San Francisco Marathon "remotely" by covering 26.2 miles on a half-mile loop around a cricket field at Forward Operating Base Fiaz in Asadabad, Afghanistan two days before the San Francisco event.

Throughout the past several years, Rossmann has faced the prospect of ending his annual engagement with the race. Either that, or cancel his equally traditional mid-summer family trek to a camp in the Adirondack Mountains. So, the race granted Rossmann a "bye," allowing him to complete the run before race day while recording an official finishing time. The tenacious runner has more than earned the privilege, as a race participant.

Rossmann completed his first marathon on his long running resume, which now includes more than 300 marathon and ultra-marathon finishes, at the inaugural marathon in San Francisco in 1977.

In total, Rossmann has completed 30 San Francisco Marathons, and has only missed one since the race's inception.

That includes his solo runs in 2007 and 2008, which he navigated without the bolstering support of fellow runners, aid stations, volunteers, or traffic control.

"The race is very special to me. Every year, I run wearing my original race T-shirt from 1977," said Rossmann, who completed this year's solo jaunt in 4 hours, 57 minutes, and 30 seconds. "There were 800 of us (runners) the first year. Now, it's really inspiring to see that The San Francisco Marathon has grown into its potential with a beautiful, course that showcases the city. It matches any marathon in the country in terms of what they provide to their runners."

This year's expected 19,000-plus entrants in The San Francisco Marathon events (which includes the companion half marathons and 5K Run/Walk) reflects a 20 percent increase from last year.

Lieutenant Colonel Weeks, 43, has planned on running The San Francisco Marathon since he began competing in marathons last year while he was stationed in California as the officer in charge of California border operations. But his military schedule didn't allow him the opportunity. Now, he has it in Afghanistan.

Weeks registered for The San Francisco Marathon, contacted the race organizers, and arranged to run the race "remotely." He put the word out to other U.S. military posts in Afghanistan about his planned run, and invited companion participants. U.S. Army soldiers Robert Cortes (Miami, Fla.), and Alexander Tabayoyon (West Richland, Wash.), and U.S. Navy man John Rousseau (Grayslake, Illinois), took up the offer, and are also entered.

The remote entrants will complete the 26.2-mile marathon distance by circling the half-mile cricket field, which is composed of hard-pack sand and clay, over 50 times. They will carefully clock their finishing times which will be recorded in the official marathon results. The field, which is used by a UNICEF-operated school, is guarded by heavily fortified watch towers. Taliban militia stalk the hills less than six miles away.

Weeks said that their times won't be fast. Unlike San Francisco's ideal mid-summer running conditions, it is hot and humid in Afghanistan, making training and running difficult. The men, tenaciously make running part of their daily physical training regimen while combating border incursions, and squeezing in runs on short, confined routes or on treadmills.

"I've gone through two sets of shoes, and broke two treadmills, training for this [marathon]," said Weeks. "My time is going to be very bad, but it doesn't matter because at least I can say I ran a marathon in a combat zone."

Photos and video segments of the remote San Francisco Marathon in Afghanistan will be available on The San Francisco Marathon's web site (www.runsfm.com), along with complete "mainland" results and information.

About six underprivileged youth who compete on the Castlemont High School (Oakland, Calif.) track and cross country teams have also faced adverse conditions training for race day. Led by

Castlemont junior Jaime Lopez, a standout 2:05 half miler on the boys track team, the group has diligently trained over the summer for The San Francisco Marathon's companion 5K Run/Walk.

"Unless we drive them somewhere to run, these kids are running around some pretty dangerous streets," said Castlemont's Head Track and Field Coach, Charles "Chuck" Schneekloth, referring to the East Oakland neighborhood where their high school is located. "Plus, there are a lot of cards stacked against these kids in an [underprivileged] urban setting. They often must work to help out their parents. They deserve a lot of credit. This summer we decided we'd love to have these young athletes get the experience of participating in a big event where there are many people immersed in a healthy lifestyle. The San Francisco Marathon invited us, and it's a perfect fit."

Almost daily, Schneekloth and Castlemont's co-Cross Country Coach, Miriam Allen, drive the athlete group to locales in the Oakland Hills, Golden Gate Park, and Lake Merritt to train for the San Francisco Marathon's 5K. They oversee a youth team, the Castle Track Club, for non-scholastic athletic participation during the summer.

TOP ENTRANTS

Competitive elite fields will head this year's full marathon and 2nd half marathon races. In the marathon, Chad Worthen (Sacramento, Calif.) and France's Mustapha Berri have the fastest seed times entering the race. Worthen 34, has a marathon best of 2:22:03 recorded at the 2002 California International Marathon, and he was a 2004 U.S. Olympic Marathon Trials qualifier. Berri, 44, a French biochemist, is one of the top masters (age 40 and over) runners in the world. Berri's personal best is also 2:22, and he was ranked the 31st fastest master man in the world last year with a 2:26:53 marathon performance. The women's marathon field is wide open after 2006 San Francisco Marathon women's champion Julia Stamps-Mallon (a former Santa Rosa High School and Stanford University standout) withdrew on pregnancy leave.

The women's 2nd half marathon field is a strong one. 1999 U.S. women's marathon champion Kim Pawelek (age 34, Jacksonville, Fla.) owns a swift 1:12:48 half marathon best. Local contenders for the 2nd half marathon title include 2008 U.S. Olympic Marathon Trials qualifier Christine Lundy (37, Sausalito, Calif.), Knox Bricken (32, San Francisco), plus former Stanford University women's cross country coach Dena Evans (33, Redwood City, Calif.). Ana Morales (26, San Mateo, Calif.), a track and field and cross country standout at Burlingame High School who also competed for the University of Notre Dame, is making her debut at the half marathon (13.1 miles) distance. On the men's side, Lief Kohler (23, Redmond, Wash.) owns a 1:09:23 personal record, set last year, which makes him a formidable contestant for the half marathon title.

The San Francisco Marathon starts and finishes on the Embarcadero at Mission Street, near Justin Herman Plaza and the Ferry Building. The official starting time is 5:30 a.m. Top runners are expected to reach the finish line at Embarcadero and Folsom at approximately 7:50 a.m.

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About The San Francisco Marathon™

The San Francisco Marathon enjoys success as the premier summertime marathon in the U.S. San Francisco's blend of natural beauty, big city charm, and perfect mid-summer running temperatures, make marathon running in San Francisco a truly magical experience. Race events include a full marathon, two half marathons (choose a half), 5K, and Progressive Marathon. The event's unique Cause to Run program has raised \$3 million for local non-profit organizations since 2003. The San Francisco Marathon's Youth Run4Fun running program allows San Francisco's underprivileged youth, ages 7 to 17, to train for, and participate in, the marathon's events without cost.

REGISTRATION DETAILS and more information about The San Francisco Marathon™, and all of the marathon's events, are available online at www.runsfm.com.

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