

press release

DEKSISA, DEGEFA LEAD ELITE FIELD FOR 2020 STANDARD CHARTERED DUBAI MARATHON

Dubai, UAE; January 22, 2020: Ethiopian duo Soloman Deksis and Worknesh Degefa will spearhead a strong elite field featuring major city marathon winners and athletes with more than 35 international victories between them when the Standard Chartered Dubai Marathon is staged on Friday (January 24).

Deksis and Degefa boast the best Personal Bests in the men and women's fields respectively and will be among the big favourites when the elite side of the IAAF Gold Label event race gets underway at 6am.

For Deksis – who set his PB of 2:04:40 when finishing third in Amsterdam in 2018 – it's a debut appearance on the flat and fast roads of Dubai and the 25-year-old will be looking to add to the back-to-back city marathon wins he enjoyed in Hamburg and Mumbai in 2018.

Another Dubai debutant is Kenya's Eric Kiptanui whose personal best of 58:42 makes him the fastest half marathon runner ever entered into the Standard Chartered Dubai Marathon and the 29-year-old can maintain Dubai's reputation as being a perfect course for debutants.

It was only a year ago when Ethiopia's Getaneh Molla won the race on his debut in a course record time of 2:03:34 - and Kiptanui has the explosive potential to continue this tradition and possibly end Ethiopia's eight-year dominance of the men's race.

But while Deksis and Kiptanui are Dubai "new boys", for Worknesh Degefa it's a welcome return to one of her favourite hunting grounds. The diminutive 29-year-old holds the distinction of being the fastest Ethiopian female marathon runner of all time thanks to a stunning personal best of 2:17:41 - the fifth fastest marathon time ever run by a woman – set in Dubai just twelve months ago.

As well as that personal best when finishing second last year, Degefa won in Dubai in 2017 and finished 4th in 2018. A superb victory at the Boston Marathon back in April 2019 shows she remains a serious world talent and will start as a hot favourite this weekend.

As always, however, she will have her challengers, most notably former Boston Marathon winner Bizunesh Deba (2:19:59) and the up-and-coming Bedatu Hirpa, who won the 2017 Athens Marathon at the age of just 18.

Held under the patronage of HH Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Crown Prince of Dubai, and under the aegis of the Dubai Sports Council, the Standard Chartered Dubai Marathon has again brought together a field of elites with marathon victories to their names in cities such as Rome, Athens, Milan, Shanghai and Lisbon.

“We are pleased to be the title sponsor of the Standard Chartered Dubai Marathon for the 16th consecutive year,” said Rola Abu Manneh, CEO for Standard Chartered Bank, UAE. “This flagship event, now in its 21st year, has become one of the region’s most anticipated social and sporting platforms bringing together thousands of people from all over the world. For the few hours of the marathon, all participants are united on one single path – to the finish line.

“As well as the elite runners, the event will also attract athletes and participants who want to challenge themselves; some who want to be fitter and healthier; some who want to raise money for charity; and some who just want a fun day out with their friends and family. And just like every year, we will have over 600 people from Standard Chartered who will be volunteering or running at the event.”

While the elite fields will take to the roads at 6am on Friday with the masses off an hour later at 7am, the honour of getting the day's action underway falls to a stellar international field of wheelchair athletes.

Among those starting a battle royale at 5.55am will be the defending champions Marcel Hug and Sandra Graf of Switzerland

"Last year we witnessed two new course records and some fantastic Marathon times," said Event Director Peter Connerton. "This week, the course is the same for the 21st running of the Standard Chartered Dubai Marathon so we are looking forward to yet another high-quality race from a talented group of elite athletes.

“Our thanks go out to our sponsors as well as the Dubai Sports Council and all the Government bodies who come together to provide the framework for this event. Without their assistance and invaluable support, a race of this scale on the streets of the city would not be possible.”

Runners looking to take part in the Marathon, the 10km Road Race (8.15am) or the 4km Fun Run (11am) can register online until Thursday (Jan 23) either at dubaimarathon.org or at Run Number collection at Jumeirah Beach Hotel Conference Centre. UAE Nationals in particular are encouraged to take part in the event thanks to the ‘#My City_My Race’ campaign, launched by Dubai Holding.

Khalid Al Malik, Managing Director of Dubai Holding said: “We introduced the UAE National Winners Category for the Dubai Marathon as part of our ongoing commitment to community wellness and fostering Emirati pride. We are delighted to see that the number of Emirati participants has grown by 325% with more than ever before set to take part in the 2020 edition of the city’s signature fitness event. I am also pleased to say that more Emirati women are participating in the Marathon. Last year, we saw almost 200 Emirati women running across the different race categories, which is 21% more than in 2018.”

He added: “This year, with our ‘#MyCity_MyRace’ campaign, we have put even more emphasis behind actively encouraging UAE Nationals of all fitness levels to take part in the 10km, 42km and Wheel Chair categories with early figures showing that 30% more will participate versus last year.

“We look forward to seeing record numbers of Emirati’s on the start line on Friday and hope that one day, the winner of the full marathon will be a UAE National.”

In addition to Standard Chartered as title sponsor, the Dubai Marathon is supported by the Dubai Sports Council, adidas, Dubai Holding, Masafi, Channel 4 Radio Network, Dubai Municipality, Dubai Police and the RTA. Live TV streaming of the race will be available at <http://bit.ly/DubaiMarathon2020>.

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