

## Rock 'n' Roll Dallas Half to feature rematch of San Antonio half; women's field led by Melisa Christian of Dallas

An elite field of Texas athletes will lead approximately 13,000 registered runners at the inaugural Rock 'n' Roll Dallas Half Marathon, benefiting Susan G. Komen for the Cure, on Sunday, March 14. The new event, managed by the Competitor Group in partnership with the Dallas White Rock Marathon, will debut as part of the Rock 'n' Roll Marathon Series and has drawn entrants from 47 states and 10 countries.

"It's going to be a fast course and very scenic," said Kari Logan, Event Director. "The route provides a good foot tour of the city and we're looking forward to hosting some of the fastest athletes in Texas and we should see a fantastic race." The race starts at Fair Park and finishes at City Hall in downtown Dallas.

The half-marathon will feature a \$12,000 prize purse split evenly between the men and women. The elite race will feature a rematch of November's thrilling half-marathon in San Antonio where Westly Keating edged out Shadrack Songok in a photo finish. Both runners made their half-marathon debuts with identical times of 1 hour, 5 minutes, 24 seconds after racing the 13.1-mile distance stride-for-stride.

Currently a high school Chemistry teacher, Keating, 27, was a five-time collegiate all-American at Texas Pan-American. He followed his San Antonio victory by taking first place in January's 3M Half Marathon in Austin with a winning time of 1:03:22. Born in Kenya, Songok graduated from Texas A&M Corpus Christi where he became the school's first NCAA Champion when he claimed the 2007 10,000-meter title in 28:55. The two had faced each other before in college, as both runners are veterans on the track, each having run sub-28:25 over 10,000 meters.

Keating and Songok will be challenged by three Kenyans out of Texas: Stephen Ariga, Patrick Mutai and James Kirwa. Ariga owns a half marathon PR of 1:02:06 and recently ran 30:44 at the All-American 10K in Edinburg. Mutai is studying at the University of Texas El Paso and owns PR's of 28:38 over 10,000m and 13:41 for 5,000m. Kirwa, who

is training in El Paso, has a PR of 1:02:54 set in Turkey in 2008. Rounding out the favorites in the men's race is Brandon Laan of Honolulu, HI. Laan finished sixth and was the top American in his marathon debut at the 2009 Honolulu Marathon in 2:25:41.

Leading the women's field is local runner Melisa Christian, who qualified for the 2008 U.S. Women's Olympic Marathon Trials in Boston. Christian owns a marathon personal best of 2:42:07 from her ninth place finish at the 2007 ING New York City Marathon. She recently finished second at the 2009 Rock 'n' Roll San Antonio Half Marathon, after winning the Dallas Running Club Half Marathon on November 1st with a time of 1:18:11.

Christian will be joined by fellow Texan Debbie Arzola-James of Allen, who won January's Miracle Match Marathon in Waco. Hoping to hit the Olympic qualifying B standard is Abbi Antablin of New York, who ran 1:17:21 at Houston this year. Six-time NCAA Division III All-American Melissa Todd of Kansas City rounds out the women's favorites. A Carthage College Graduate, Todd set her personal best of 1:16:02 at the Bill Seymour Half Marathon last year.

Event weekend kicks off with a two-day Health and Fitness Expo at the Dallas Convention Center on Friday, March 12 and Saturday, March 13. The Expo is free and open to the public as all race participants pick up their race number, t-shirt and timing tag, while browsing over 100 exhibitors featuring free samples, the latest in running gear and sports apparel, as well as series of interactive clinics. Race registration is available at the expo.