



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MEDIA CONTACT:

Steve Byrne

spbyrne31@gmail.com

New Elite Field means Detroit's marathon is getting bigger, better and faster

World-class runners will hit the Motor City for the 2024 Detroit Free Press Marathon presented by MSU Federal Credit Union

(DETROIT – April 4, 2024) The state's premier marathon is about to get even better – and even faster.

The Detroit Free Press Marathon presented by MSU Federal Credit Union announced today that it is adding an Elite Field to the race beginning in 2024. What it means: Some of the top runners in the country will be lacing up in Detroit this fall – and beyond.

With the addition of numerous amenities designed with elite distance runners in mind, the race will instantly become a more attractive draw to the sport's top athletes. But the addition of an Elite Field is about much more than just the first pack to cross the finish line. A more competitive race at the top will benefit everyone from other racers to spectators to the city as a whole.

The new Elite Field is part of a long-term plan to expand the race's size, stature and influence. The growth is expected in both the world of competitive long distance running, and its broader reach as a premier event in the state of Michigan and city of Detroit.

The race weekend, which drew nearly 24,000 runners in 2023, generating over \$28 million of economic impact to the city of Detroit, is already a standout thanks to its positions as the largest international marathon in North America and the only marathon worldwide to cross international borders twice. The addition of approximately 100 athletes in the Elite Field will build on other recent marathon weekend improvements, including the unveiling of a new course in 2022.

“Detroit is home to one of the world’s most unique courses in our sport. Adding an elite field was the next step to put Detroit’s iconic race on the map of professional distance running,” said Aaron Velthoven, the marathon’s vice president and race director. “We live in one of the greatest professional sports cities in America. Our goal is to attract athletes that will go on to compete in the Abbott World Marathon Majors and Olympic Trials, elevating Detroit’s tremendous professional sports landscape.”

To draw the marathon world’s top runners, races have to provide specific amenities, including special gear check, heated staging area, designated elite fluid stations and an attractive prize purse. All of those elements will be in place by the 2024 race weekend, Oct. 18-20.

Overseeing the Elite Field is Olympic Trials Marathon qualifier Zach Ornelas, a two-time Detroit Free Press Marathon winner who has finished in the top 30 at the Boston Marathon three times. The Ann Arbor resident will lead the marathon’s efforts to attract world-class runners and keep them coming back.

Ornelas has competed around the world, and describes the Detroit Free Press Marathon as a “huge event that maintains the charm of a local race.” He says that providing the care typically granted to Olympic-caliber athletes at the majors will allow these athletes to shave minutes off their already stellar personal records.

“Winning Detroit allowed my marathon career to take off; I have traveled the world running big races since then,” says Ornelas, who won Detroit in 2013 and 2015. “I want to provide the amenities to the current and next generation of marathoners to allow them to continue to push the limits of American distance running. And I want Detroit to do the same for them that it did for me.”

Elite qualifying times for the men’s and women’s International Marathon Field, with additional Seeded Elite and Sub-Elite Field standards, can be found on the Elite Athlete page on the race website: www.freepmarathon.com/elite.

Registration for all runners — elite or otherwise — is open now at www.freepmarathon.com.

About the Detroit Free Press Marathon: The Detroit Free Press Marathon, presented by MSUFCU, is Michigan’s largest road race, North America’s largest international road race and a beloved tradition among runners across the world. Featuring a unique cross-border course between the United States and Canada, the event showcases the spirit of Detroit and its vibrant communities. Detroit’s race weekend will be held October 18-20, 2024. Races include the Marathon, International Half-Marathon, Motor City Half-Marathon, Marathon Relay, 5k, 1-Mile, Kids Marathon and Meijer Little Detroit Dash.

For Detroit Free Press Marathon photos, including of Zach Ornelas, go here: [LINK](#).

###