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Two-Time World Marathon Majors Series Champion Liliya Shobukhova Gears Up for Olympics with Back-to-Back Races in WMM Cities

Shobukhova Opens Her 2012 Season Next Month at the NYC Half and Chicago's Bank of America Shamrock Shuffle 8K

NEW YORK/CHICAGO, February 22, 2012 – Two-time World Marathon Majors series champion and three-time Bank of America Chicago Marathon winner Liliya Shobukhova of Russia will open her 2012 season at the NYC Half on Sunday, March 18, followed with a run at the Bank of America Shamrock Shuffle 8K in Chicago on Sunday, March 25, it was jointly announced today by NYRR president and CEO Mary Wittenberg and Bank of America Chicago Marathon and Shamrock Shuffle 8K Executive Race Director Carey Pinkowski.

Shobukhova, 34, an early favorite for the Olympic Games Marathon in London this summer said of her spring trip to the U.S., "This Olympic year will be the most important of my career, so I am choosing all of my competitions carefully. The NYC Half will allow me to test my fitness and compete against some of the same runners I will face in the Olympic Marathon, while going to Chicago for the Bank of America Shamrock Shuffle 8K will allow me to connect with all of the great fans and runners there on a course that feels like home to me in the city where I have had so much success. It's the perfect trip."

Shobukhova will make her third start at an NYRR event having last raced at the NYRR Mini 10K in 2011. Last fall, Shobukhova cemented her legacy in Chicago by winning her third consecutive Bank of America Chicago Marathon, becoming the first runner to do so in the event's 34-year history.

"Consistency is a sign of greatness and nobody has been more consistent than Liliya at the marathon distance the last few years," said Wittenberg. "We welcome her back to NY for her first steps on the road to the London Olympics."

Shobukhova will join other Olympic contenders Kara Goucher and Desiree Davila of the U.S. in the NYC Half. NYRR's flagship half-marathon, in its seventh edition, will feature a record field of 15,000 runners, a $100,000 prize purse and a new course traversing through Manhattan beginning in Central Park, going through Times Square and all the way downtown to the scenic South Street Seaport finish.

The Bank of America Shamrock Shuffle 8K marks Chicago's annual kick-off to the running season. Shobukhova will be joined by U.S. Olympic Marathon team member Abdi Abdirahman

as they lead the way for 40,000 runners at the 33rd annual race through downtown Chicago. The flat and fast course mirrors the start and finish of the Bank of America Chicago Marathon in Grant Park, where Shobukhova made history last fall.

“Liliya has performed at the highest level on the streets of Chicago and we’re excited that her road to the Olympics will once again run through our city,” said Pinkowski. “The Shamrock Shuffle is an opportunity for Liliya to celebrate the start of a new season alongside the local fans who have supported her and will be rooting for her as one of their own at the Olympic Games.”

There is precedent for a Bank of America Shamrock Shuffle 8K winner to go on to win the gold medal in the Olympic Marathon. Constantina Dita of Romania, the 2006 Shamrock Shuffle champion (and 2004 Chicago Marathon champion) struck gold at the 2008 Olympic Marathon in Beijing.

About NYRR
New York Road Runners was founded in 1958 when a small group of passionate runners vowed to bring running to the people. Over the past 53 years, NYRR has grown from a local running club to the world’s premier community running organization. NYRR’s mission is to empower everyone, of all ages and abilities—beginners and competitive athletes, the young and the elderly, adult professionals and underserved schoolchildren—to improve their health and well-being through the power of running and fitness.

NYRR’s races, community events, instruction and training resources, and youth programs give hundreds of thousands of people each year the motivation, know-how, and opportunity to start running and keep running for life. NYRR’s premier event, the famed ING New York City Marathon, attracts the world’s top pro runners and committed amateurs alike while also raising millions of dollars annually for charity and driving economic impact for the City. But NYRR is equally committed to the runners of tomorrow, passionately providing youth fitness programs that educate and inspire more than 100,000 kids in underserved communities in New York City, all 50 states, and around the world.

Headquartered in New York City, NYRR implements a unique nonprofit model that teams contributed and earned income to make all its efforts possible. To learn more, please visit www.nyrr.org.

About the Bank of America Shamrock Shuffle 8K
Long recognized as an annual rite of spring and the kick-off to the outdoor running season in Chicago, the 33rd annual Bank of America Shamrock Shuffle 8K takes runners on a scenic tour of downtown Chicago, starting and finishing in Grant Park. The race will begin at 8:30 a.m. on Sunday, March 25, and will conclude with live music by “Mike and Joe” at the traditional Post-Race Party in Grant Park. In advance of the event, the two-day Bank of America Shamrock Shuffle 8K Health & Fitness Expo will take place at Navy Pier on Friday, March 23, and Saturday, March 24, featuring more than 80 industry-related exhibitors. The Health & Fitness Expo is free and open to the public. For more information about the event and how to get involved, go to www.shamrockshuffle.com.

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