**News  
Release**

Embargoed until 12/17/19

9:00 a.m. EST TSX/NYSE/PSE: MFC SEHK: 945

**John Hancock and the Boston Athletic Association Announce Return of 16 Champions for 2020 Boston Marathon**

* *Lawrence Cherono, Worknesh Degefa, Manuela Schär and Daniel Romanchuk set to defend their titles on April 20, 2020*
* *12 Additional Champions aim to return to the top of the podium*
* *2018 Boston Champion Desiree Linden to Run the U.S. Olympic Trials Marathon and the Boston Marathon*

**BOSTON, MA, December 17, 2019** —John Hancock and the Boston Athletic Association today announced the return of 2019 Boston Marathon open champions Lawrence Cherono and Worknesh Degefa and wheelchair champions Manuela Schär and Daniel Romanchuk for the 124th running of the race on April 20, 2020.

Twelve additional champions will also seek another win: open champions Desiree Linden, Yuki Kawauchi, Edna Kiplagat, Geoffrey Kirui, Lelisa Desisa, Caroline Rotich; and wheelchair champions Tatyana McFadden, Marcel Hug, Ernst van Dyk, Hiroyuki Yamamoto, Joshua Cassidy and Masazumi Soejima. Linden will run both the 2020 U.S. Olympic Trials Marathon on February 29 and the Boston Marathon on April 20, while two-time champion Desisa returns as reigning World Athletics Marathon Champion.

“In our 35th year as principal sponsor of this historic race, we are excited to welcome back our accomplished champions,” said John Hancock Chief Marketing Officer Barbara Goose. “Their return is a testimony to the tradition and legacy that is the Boston Marathon. These champions are not just racing each other, they are chasing history. On Patriots’ Day we will cheer for all as they persevere with determination to cross the finish line and become part of our city. Welcome to Boston.”

“The race for the tape on Patriots’ Day will surely be both competitive and compelling, as John Hancock has fielded a tremendous team of champions,” said Tom Grilk, Chief Executive Officer of the B.A.A. “With 16 returning champions, the roads leading to Boston will be filled with many of the most decorated runners and wheelchair racers in history. Another memorable chapter in Boston Marathon history will surely unfold on April 20.”

Watch the Returning Champions [Video](https://youtu.be/fYdxgOrzB70).

**Athlete Quotes**

**Lawrence Cherono:** Winner of the 2019 Boston Marathon by two-seconds over two-time champion Lelisa Desisa, Cherono has won eight marathons, including a win at the 2019 Bank of America Chicago Marathon and wins in Amsterdam and Honolulu.

“I am happy to return to the Boston Marathon to defend my title. Boston will have a special place in my memories forever,” said Cherono. “I loved every mile of this race and fought until the end to achieve the first place and become part of the elite family to have won the most prestigious race of the world. I look forward to being at the start line of the 2020 edition.”

**Worknesh Degefa:** Champion of the 2019 Boston Marathon and the 2017Dubai Marathon, Degefa holds the Ethiopian National Record in the marathon. Last year she won by 42 seconds.

“I am so happy to accept the invitation from John Hancock to return to Boston next year as the defending champion of this historic race,” said Degefa. “I could see first-hand how special the city of Boston, all the towns along the course, and the community is to so many people. And of course, I look forward to the challenge next April of once again racing against the world’s best athletes. I can’t wait to return to defend my title in April.”

**Manuela Sch****är:** The course record holder (1:28:17) and reigning champion, Schär returns looking for her third Boston victory. Schär won the Abbott World Marathon Majors Series XII title in 2019.

**“**I am very excited to return to Boston. Next year is going to be a very special and exciting year with Tokyo 2020 coming up and every single race is going to be a test and an assessment,” said Schär.

**Daniel Romanchuk:** Romanchuk made race history in 2019, becoming the youngest men’s wheelchair winner in race history at the age of 20. He earned America’s first win in the division since 1993, breaking the tape in 1:21:36 last year.

“Winning Boston last year was a life-changing event, and I can't wait to return to defend my title,” said Romanchuk. “I'm sure the field will be well-prepared to battle it out again, so the race should be an exciting one to watch unfold. I hope we can give the amazing Boston crowds a great race!”

**Desiree Linden**: A two-time U.S. Olympian and winner of the 2018 Boston Marathon, Linden has placed top-five in nine Abbott World Marathon Majors. She will race in both the 2020 U.S. Olympic Marathon Trials and 2020 Boston Marathon.

“I'm ecstatic to have another opportunity to line up at the Boston Marathon as part of the John Hancock Elite Team. At this point in my career I enter each race with a heightened sense of urgency and have become very selective in what races I'm willing to commit my time and energy to,” said Linden. “The Boston Marathon has always been the most motivating race on my schedule; I’m grateful that in an Olympic year John Hancock is supportive of me competing in the U.S. Olympic Trials as well. I hope to stand on the start line in Hopkinton as the first U.S. Woman to have made three Olympic Marathon teams.”

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **John Hancock Elite Team**  **Open Champions** | **Country** | **Personal Best Time** |
| Lawrence Cherono | Kenya | 2:04:06 (Amsterdam, 2018) CR |
| Lelisa Desisa | Ethiopia | 2:04:45 (Dubai, 2013) |
| Geoffrey Kirui | Kenya | 2:06:27 (Amsterdam, 2016) |
| Yuki Kawauchi | Japan | 2:08:14 (Seoul, 2013) |
| Worknesh Degefa | Ethiopia | 2:17:41 (Dubai, 2019) NR |
| Edna Kiplagat | Kenya | 2:19:50 (London, 2012) |
| Desiree Linden | U.S.A. | 2:22:38 (Boston, 2011) |
| Caroline Rotich | Kenya | 2:23:22 (Chicago, 2012) |
|  |  |  |
| **B.A.A. Wheelchair Champions** | **Country** | **Personal Best Time** |
| Marcel Hug | Switzerland | 1:18:04 (Boston, 2017) |
| Ernst van Dyk | South Africa | 1:18:04 (Boston, 2017) |
| Joshua Cassidy | Canada | 1:18:25 (Boston, 2012) |
| Masazumi Soejima | Japan | 1:18:50 (Boston, 2011) |
| Hiroyuki Yamamoto | Japan | 1:19:32 (Boston, 2017) |
| Daniel Romanchuk | U.S.A. | 1:21:36 (Boston, 2019) |
| Manuela Schär | Switzerland | 1:28:17 (Boston, 2017) |
| Tatyana McFadden | U.S.A. | 1:31:30 (Duluth, 2019) |

Additional elite field announcements will roll out over the next few months. For more information about the elite athlete program and sponsorship, please visit: [John Hancock](http://www.johnhancock.com/bostonmarathon/sportspartnerships.html?cid=US_JH_BR_EM_Newswire_BostonMarathon_Brand_WR_CS_NL_DP_00_00_00_AW_00_20191217_ChampionsMoreInfo_Newsletter)

**About John Hancock and Manulife**

John Hancock is a unit of Manulife Financial Corporation, a leading international financial services group that helps people make their decisions easier and lives better. We operate primarily as John Hancock in the United States, and Manulife globally, including Canada, Asia and Europe. We provide financial advice, insurance and wealth and asset management solutions for individuals, groups and institutions. Assets under management and administration by Manulife and its subsidiaries were over CAD$1.2 trillion (US$$881 billion) as of September 30, 2019. Manulife Financial Corporation trades as MFC on the TSX, NYSE, and PSE, and under 945 on the SEHK. Manulife can be found at manulife.com.

One of the largest life insurers in the United States, John Hancock supports more than 10 million Americans with a broad range of financial products, including [life insurance](https://www.johnhancock.com/individual/products-and-services/insurance.html?cid=US_JH_BR_EM_Newswire_BostonMarathon_Brand_WR_CS_NL_DP_00_00_00_AW_00_20191217_ChampionsLifeIns_Newsletter), [annuities](https://www.jhannuities.com/Marketing/default.aspx?cid=US_JH_BR_EM_Newswire_BostonMarathon_Brand_WR_CS_NL_DP_00_00_00_AW_00_20191217_ChampionsAnnuities_Newsletter), [investments](https://www.jhinvestments.com/?cid=US_JH_BR_EM_Newswire_BostonMarathon_Brand_WR_CS_NL_DP_00_00_00_AW_00_20191217_ChampionsInvestments_Newsletter)[,](http://www.jhinvestments.com/) [401(k) plans](https://www.johnhancock.com/individual/products-and-services/Retirement.html?cid=US_JH_BR_EM_Newswire_BostonMarathon_Brand_WR_CS_NL_DP_00_00_00_AW_00_20191217_Champions401kplans_Newsletter), and [college savings plans](https://www.jhinvestments.com/529?cid=US_JH_BR_EM_Newswire_BostonMarathon_Brand_WR_CS_NL_DP_00_00_00_AW_00_20191217_ChampionsCollegeSavings_Newsletter). Additional information about John Hancock may be found at [johnhancock.com](https://www.johnhancock.com/individual.html?cid=US_JH_BR_EM_Newswire_BostonMarathon_Brand_WR_CS_NL_DP_00_00_00_AW_00_20191217_ChampionsHomepage_Newsletter).

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **# # #** |  |  |