

For immediate release: March 20, 2010

Contact: Pat Harris: (310) 938-0130

## **Legacy runners reflect on 25 years of marathon experiences**

*Field of 25,000 brings at least that many stories to Sunday's race*

LOS ANGELES – March 20, 2010 – Sunday's race will be the 25th edition of what is now called the Honda LA Marathon presented by K-Swiss. It started out with a record number of 10,787 entrants in 1986, the most ever for a first-time marathon race.

On Sunday, there will be 233 men and women at the starting line who will be running their 25th Los Angeles Marathon, a little more than 2% of the original field, who brought their experiences to a news conference at Dodger Stadium on Saturday.

Flavio Bisignano, who at 83 years of age is the second-oldest legacy runner, told reporters that "I'm doing this to stay healthy and well. I think in life we have to work hard, play hard and give back. In '69 and '70 I was a war correspondent in Vietnam, so with all the tramping around I thought I better get in shape. I've run about 120 marathons.

"I broke my femur with the help of my dog eight months ago. I need to be cautious but I'm going to hobble along tomorrow and it's going to take me a long time, but I'm going to finish. I enjoy the companionship of other runners."

The youngest legacy runner, Aimee Wyatt, was just 16 at the inaugural race and remembered, "I started this with my sister. I was visiting Los Angeles at Christmastime and saw it being advertised on television. We thought it would be fun. We'd run about seven miles in the Bay-to-Breakers and thought we could make at least part of the marathon.

"We started running, went along and looked at each other at the halfway point, and said this is still fun, so we kept going and finished five hours and 40 minutes later. It was a long run. In the ensuing months we forgot about the recovery time and thought it would be fun again."

One of the visual trademarks of the Los Angeles Marathon is the giant letters spelling out "LA" and the race number at the start. That's another tradition the legacy runners have carried forward. "For the first marathon, the family of Elaine Herfert made a great big sign and put it up in the air so her husband could see where they were in the massive crowd in the starting line," remembered Lou Briones, known as "Legacy Lou" for his work in helping to coordinate the legacy entries. Briones said that Herfert's husband "was ill and couldn't come to the race.

"The following year the Herferts came back and made a sign, "LA II." It became a tradition. Elaine was a Legacy Runner until 2006 when she had hip surgery, and didn't finish. In 2007 there was no sign. In 2008 the Legacy Runners decided we should carry on the tradition. In 2009 we went to numeric numbers instead of Roman numbers and changed the logo with the new ownership." Briones, co-coordinator Denny Smith and others will carry the giant "LA 25" signs in bright orange on Sunday morning.

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Honda LA Marathon legacy runners share their memories

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Briones also commended the marathon organizers for the new Stadium to the Sea course, starting at Dodger Stadium and finishing at Ocean Avenue and Santa Monica Boulevard in Santa Monica.

“The new organizers consulted with a lot of the running community and asked us what we’d like to have on the route and what would be a good experience,” he explained. “This course is a result of those discussions. The course is hilly. The hills are going to be in the first 10K so it will be nice to get them out of the way early. The last 3.2 miles is downhill, not a severe downhill and everyone will love it.”

Two non-legacy runners with interesting experiences also spoke to reporters, one of whom – Ravi Rajan from Los Angeles – will run two marathons on Sunday! “My plan is to start tomorrow morning at 1 a.m. from the finish line in Santa Monica and run to the start line at Dodger Stadium,” he said. “I plan to get there, if I follow my directions correctly, by 6 a.m. and then start with everybody at 7:24 and get back to the finish line.

“I look sane, but I’m a little insane. I came up with this idea to do a double marathon through my dad. My dad is legally blind and attends a school that teaches him how to use the computer by feel. I thought if I run the marathon and ask my friends for a \$1 a mile that would be great, but if I double the distance than I double the money. I have some crazy friends who have volunteered to crew for me while I run who will hand out food and water in the first marathon. The second marathon I’ll be on my own, but that won’t be a problem.”

A special guest at this year’s Marathon is Lt. Jeremy Arnett of the 56th Stryker Brigade from the Pennsylvania National Guard. He was the organizer of a “shadow marathon” at Camp Taji, Iraq last year, which was logistically supported by LA MARATHON LLC and run on the same day, a continent away. “The support was phenomenal,” he said. “It was overwhelming the amount of support they provided us. We were expecting about 200 runners, but we ended with 467 runners. We only four heat casualties. We had one general who made it within three-tenths of a mile of the finish line and he went down. He needed four IVs. After he finished his four IVs. he went back to where he went down and finished the race ... ran across the finish line. It was something they will always remember.”

How Arnett came to Sunday’s race was equally dramatic. “The 56th Stryker Brigade was deployed home in September 2009 and I kept in contact with Ginger [Williams, the race’s community relations director]. I was doing the Marine Corps Marathon and the L.A. Marathon surprised me with a visit by Ginger, who invited all of us who ran at the Camp Taji marathon to run.

“I’m looking forward to the course. It’s going to be a vast improvement over last year (at Camp Taji). I’m taking my camera on it and I’m taking my time.”

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Arnett is being supported by 2010 Honda LA Marathon sponsors K-Swiss, who provided him with a set of racing gear and especially by Don Francisco's Coffee, which will make a donation in honor of Arnett to the Special Operations Warrior Foundation. Arnett chose the charity, which he explained "creates scholarships for children of the fallen to be able to continue their education and go to college."

Legacy co-coordinator Smith annually creates a poem to help motivate the legacy runners to keep their streaks alive and summed up the sentiments of many of Sunday's runners this way:

*It's now Stadium to the Sea ...  
A course designed so brill-i-ant-ly ...  
For greater L.A. and the world.*

*Eyes will be poppin'  
Jaws they'll be droppin'  
But when we run down Rodeo . . .  
There'll be no time for shoppin'.*

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