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**Defending Bank of America Shamrock Shuffle 8K Champions Stephen Sambu and Alexi Pappas
Return to Chase the Hat-Trick on April 2**

*Historic Chicago Race to Feature Olympians Deena Kastor and Diego Estrada, Paralympian
Amanda McGrory and Local Elite Runner Kristen Heckert*

CHICAGO – The Bank of America Shamrock Shuffle 8K announced today that 2015 and 2016 champions Stephen Sambu (Tucson, Ariz.) and Alexi Pappas (Eugene, Ore.) return to the streets of Chicago to chase the elusive hat-trick of three consecutive victories, and to officially kick off the spring running season.

“We are always excited to bring Olympians and champions back to Chicago – Stephen and Alexi have developed a local following, and they magnify the fun spirit of the Shuffle,” said Executive Race Director Carey Pinkowski. “For 38 years, this race has been a local running celebration of family traditions, debut runners, warmer weather and individual and team competitions.”

Sambu and Pappas defended their Shamrock Shuffle 8K titles in 2016 with commanding performances, finishing in 22:45 and 26:17, respectively. Sambu’s time was the fourth-fastest time in the event’s history (he also holds the 13th-fastest time), and he returns after making his 26.2-mile debut in Chicago with a fifth-place finish last fall. Sambu owns the world’s best time in the 8K (22:01.1), and he remains a direct threat to the Shamrock Shuffle 8K course record (22:35), set in 1998 by James Kariuki (KEN).

Pappas, a creative force to be reckoned with as a writer, poet and movie producer, ended her 2015 season with personal bests in every distance from the mile to 10 miles. She ended her 2016 racing season as an Olympian; Pappas, who holds dual citizenship, represented Greece in Rio and set a personal best in the 10,000m (31:36.16) in the fastest 10,000m women’s race ever run.

Olympian Diego Estrada (Flagstaff, Ariz.) and 2016 runner-up and local elite runner Kristen Heckert (Bolingbrook, Ill.) boast the potential to stop a three-peat. Estrada is the seventh-fastest American over the half-marathon distance, and in spite of an early fall at the 2016 Bank of America Chicago Marathon, he emerged as the first American across the line in eighth place.



In 2016, Heckert set a personal record (PR) of 26:35 at the Shamrock Shuffle 8K for a second-place finish; she turned in the nation's 32nd-fastest time in the 10,000m (33:03); and she set a PR in the marathon at the Bank of America Chicago Marathon (2:39:37).

Paralympian and three-time Bank of America Chicago Marathon champion Amanda McGrory makes her debut in the wheelchair competition, and Olympic marathon bronze medalist, 2005 Chicago Marathon and Shamrock Shuffle 8K champion and Shamrock Shuffle 8K course and American record-holder, Deena Kastor, adds an exclamation point to the entire elite field.

Joining this star-studded field are some of the nation's most talented club runners, competing head-to-head for a \$20,000 prize purse in the Deloitte Elite Club 8K Competition. The ninth annual team competition welcomes men's and women's USATF-member racing teams from across the country.

Last year, the competition attracted athletes from 50 elite running teams and eight states. For the fifth time, runners from the Michigan-based Hansons-Brooks Distance Project won both the men's and women's Elite Club Competition titles.

"At Deloitte, well-being is an important part of our culture, and we believe well-being matters for everyone," said Carl Allegretti, Chicago managing partner, Deloitte LLP. "That's why it's such a pleasure to be part of the traditional start of Chicago's running season with the Shamrock Shuffle and the Elite Club 8K Competition. It's just one way we can help our Chicago practice and the local community better nurture a healthy body, an engaged mind, and a sense of purpose."

The 2017 race marks the second year of Deloitte's title sponsorship of the elite and open team competitions.

The Deloitte Elite Club 8K Competition is open to all USATF-member running clubs whose members meet the event-required qualifying standards. For qualifying standards, event information and registration details, visit <http://www.shamrockshuffle.com/eliteclub>.

About the Bank of America Shamrock Shuffle 8K

Long recognized as an annual rite of spring, a celebration of St. Patrick's Day and the kickoff to the outdoor running season in Chicago, the 38th 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, April 2, and will conclude with live music 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 McCormick Place on Friday, March 31, and Saturday, April 1, 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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