Gary Higgins
Minister for Sport and Recreation

Mitchell Street Mile to welcome elite Japanese middle distance runner

10 September 2015

The Mitchell Street Mile has attracted one of Japan’s top female middle distance runners.

Ruriko Kubo, 26, won the Japanese championship title over 800m in 2012 and is an elite runner now based in the United States. Her entry in the women’s elite section of the race is further confirmation of the growing status of the event, billed at the hottest mile in the Southern Hemisphere.

She will line up against a very strong women’s elite section field which includes Queenslander Genevieve LaCaze, 25, who represented Australia in the 2012 Olympics and 2014 Commonwealth Games, elite Canberra athlete Melissa Duncan, and 2014 Commonwealth Games steeplechaser Madeleine Heiner from New South Wales. All three recently represented Australia in the World Athletics Championships in Beijing.

“The women’s elite run is set for a cracking pace and will form part of a fantastic program of events that will bring a great spectacle to the Darwin CBD on Sunday 20 September,” Sport and Recreation Minister Gary Higgins said.

“We have attracted some of Australia’s best runners to compete in this year’s event, which not only adds to the calibre of the event, it also brings visitors to the Top End during the traditionally quieter Build-Up period.

“It’s also very pleasing that we are starting to see the word spread into Asian countries about the Mitchell Street Mile, which is part of the Festivals NT calendar of events.

“The Mitchell Street Mile is a great day out for everyone. Whether you are someone who laces the trainers up only every now and then, or if you are more into the fun of it and willing to try your luck in the fancy dress section, come along and join in this wonderful event.

“This is another great event in a fantastic year of fixtures from the Davis Cup through to first class rugby league, AFL, cricket and soccer games. All made possible by the NT Government.”

The Mitchell Street Mile is delivered by Athletics NT in partnership with the Government. Athletics NT General Manager John Bowden said the event was generating strong interest in the national running community.
“With $7500 on the line to win in each of the women’s and men’s elite sections, the Mitchell Street Mile is the richest non marathon road race in Australia, there is very strong interest among Australia’s elite athletes, as well as growing interest internationally,” he said.

Ruriko Kubo is pushing for selection in the Japanese team for the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro. She said she was excited about racing on Australian soil for just the second time as part of her preparations.

“My aim is to make the Rio Olympics and I am putting all my efforts towards that and testing my limits as much as possible,” she said.

Madeleine Heiner will be coming to the Mitchell Street Mile after performing solidly in last month’s World Championships in both the 5000m and the 3000m steeplechase.

“The prize money is appealing, and the field is hot, so that is a great opportunity for me to get to do a short sharp race against some quality girls,” Heiner said.

“There’s just something nice about road races - you get close to the crowd and I hear the Mitchell Street Mile is legendary for that. For a few of us we’ll be coming straight off world champs so we’ll be in good shape.”

Genevieve LaCaze said the top Aussie trio were looking forward to battling it out amongst themselves and other challengers for pole position in the event.

“I have never raced in Darwin nor have I ever visited so traveling up north to compete will be a lot of fun for me,” LaCaze said.

“This type of race will be a great way for our group of professional athletes to finish off the season as we have been racing on the track all year in highly competitive and stressful meets. Road miles are always a lot of fun to race and with it being in Australia racing a domestic field, it will be a much more enjoyable atmosphere for us all - especially getting to run through the middle of a capital city.”

The Mitchell Street Mile program will include runs from 3.30pm to 7.30pm. To enter and view the program, visit www.mitchellstreetmile.com.au

To ensure the safety of all participants and spectators, Mitchell Street will be closed to all public vehicle traffic from 6am through to 10.30pm on the day of the event from Bennett Street to McLachlan Street. Traffic control will be in place to facilitate necessary access.

Athletics NT and the Northern Territory Government are committed to ensuring that this event is run safely and with minimal inconvenience for residents and traders. If you experience any issues or have concerns, please email mitchell.mile@nt.gov.au or call 8945 1979.

ATTACHED:

Photos of Madeleine Heiner, Genevieve LaCaze, Melissa Duncan, Ruriko Kubo
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Ruriko Kubo - Japanese National Championships
Melissa Duncan - World Athletics Championships
Genevieve LaCaze - World Athletics Championships
Madaleine Heiner - Sydney Track Classic