PRESS RELEASE

Elvis Wins GEICO Rock 'n' Roll Las Vegas Marathon

- *Mike Wardian placed first in the men's marathon and set a Guinness World Record for fastest marathon in an Elvis costume*
- *William Kebor set a course record in the men's half marathon*
- *Snoop Dogg headlined the pre race Toyota Rock 'n' Roll Concert Series*

LAS VEGAS – November 13, 2016 – On a night when more than 45,000 runners, walkers and wheelchair athletes toured a packed Las Vegas Strip beneath the glare of casino lights, the GEICO Rock 'n' Roll Las Vegas Marathon & ½ Marathon celebrated a fitting winner.

Elvis.

Running his first race in an Elvis Presley costume, Mike Wardian not only won the marathon, but set a Guinness World Record for fastest marathon in an Elvis costume. With his black pompadour bouncing off his head, Wardian crossed the finish line in 2 hours, 38 minutes, 4 seconds.

The old Elvis record was 2:42:52 set by Ian Sharman on Nov. 29, 2009.

Standing in front of The Mirage Hotel & Casino moments after the volcano erupted, Wardian was asked how he pulled off the feat.

"The energy of the crowd," he said. "And Elvis definitely helped. It was much less me and more him tonight."

The Strip is closed to traffic two nights of the year – New Year's Eve and for the GEICO Rock 'n' Roll Las Vegas Marathon & ½ Marathon. Thousands line Las Vegas Boulevard and they filled Wardian with love.

"The King is here," some shouted as he passed.

"Viva Las Vegas," others screamed.

"Thank you, thank you very much," cried some.

At 42, Wardian is a three-time Olympic Trials marathon qualifier. He lives in Arlington Va., and pays the bills as an international ship broker. On a beautiful warm evening beneath a golden full moon, Wardian needed all the spectators' love.

He barely beat 24-year-old Eric Fitzpatrick of Boise, Idaho. Fitzpatrick finished 53 seconds back in 2:38:57.

"The guy is very humble and down to Earth," said the 24-year-old Fitzpatrick. "I hope I'm doing that when I'm 42.

Chelsey Leighton, 25 from Lewiston, Idaho, won the women's marathon in 3:12:11.

History was set in the half marathon as well. Kenya's William Kibor set a race record, winning in 1 hour, 1 minute, 21 seconds. The old record was 1:01:40, set by Ethiopia's Bekana Daba in 2009.

Elkanah Kibet of Kenya placed second, more than two minutes back in 1:03:35.

It turned out to be a Kenyan sweep in the half marathon as Elvin Kibet won the women's race in 1:15:35. Katja Goldring of Flagstaff, Ariz., finished second in 1:16:10.

In the men's half marathon, Kibor wasted no time taking the lead, zooming out in front early, running by himself the rest of the way.

"Always, when I'm alone, I'm running terrified," said Kibor.

It worries him, he said, that someone might be gaining. So he kept looking over his shoulder but no one was in sight.

"Can't help it," he said. "When I'm in front, I'm scared."

As for The Strip, at night, Kibor loved the atmosphere.

"Las Vegas, the lights, the music, the spectators, it is very beautiful," he said. "Maybe I can stay in Vegas. Maybe I can get married here."

Elvin Kibet, the women's winner, was aiming to break her personal record, set last month when she won the Transamerica Rock 'n' Roll Denver Half Marathon. She finished 10 seconds shy of her time in Colorado and blamed it on going too fast, too soon.

"I was excited," she said. "Maybe a little too excited."

The 5-foot, 90-pound Kibet gave Las Vegas two very big thumbs up.

"It was amazing. I've never seen anything like this," she said. "The music is great. I think I will come back every year. This is the best course ever."

The GEICO Rock 'n' Roll Las Vegas Marathon & ½ Marathon attracted runners from all 50 states and 83 countries.

The race began in the late afternoon on the south end of Las Vegas Boulevard across the street from Mandalay Bay. Among the costumed characters were Spiderman, Forrest Gump, T-Rexes, Wonder Woman, Superman and too many Elvis impersonators to count.

San Diegan Henry Chan may have been the most dedicated Elvis. He ran bare footed, which he has now done for more than 50 half marathons.

A common line Chan hears from fans along the course: "Where are your blue suede shoes?"

But on this evening, Chan, at best, was the second most famous Elvis.

Mike Wardian stole the show. He didn't know he was leading the marathon for certain until the finish line was in sight.

"It was so cool," he said. "I kept repeating this phrase. 'Taking care of business.' I just repeated that mantra the last couple of miles."

 Knowing the victory was his, he finally celebrated.

"I was so happy to see the (finishing) clock," he said. "That's when I could start slapping the spectators' hands."

Download Photos:
Mike Wardian
Start Line
(Photo Credit: Ryan Bethke)

About GEICO Rock 'n' Roll Las Vegas
The GEICO Rock 'n' Roll Las Vegas Marathon & ½ Marathon will take over the world famous Las Vegas Strip on Sunday night, November 13, 2016. Race participants enjoy the city's lavish hotels, world-class entertainment and some of Vegas' hottest music sensations performing on the course. In addition to live entertainment along the course, the Las Vegas event is renowned for hundreds of runners dressed as Elvis, known as the Running Elvi. Every year the event also includes a Run-Thru Wedding Chapel where runners in love can tie the knot or renew their vows on the race route. The finish line venue in front of the Mirage Volcano is conveniently located less than one mile from more than 15 resorts, offering runners a nearby walk back to their respective hotel after the race. Since 2009, more than $20 million has been raised by runners for various charities at the Las Vegas event, which annually generates $165 million in economic impact to the region. For more information about GEICO Rock 'n' Roll Las Vegas, visit StripatNight.com and follow @RunRocknRoll on Twitter.

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