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**PRESS RELEASE**  
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**THREE-TIME NAPA VALLEY MARATHON CHAMPION CHRIS MOCKO**  
**HIGHLIGHTS 2017 ELITE FIELD**

*39th Annual Race Will Also Honor Past Standout Dick Beardsley*

**NAPA, Calif. — February 24, 2017** —The [Kaiser Permanente Napa Valley Marathon](#) (NVM) announced today that three-time men's champion **Chris Mocko** (Mill Valley, Calif.) will return to world-renowned Napa Valley and anchor a small, but talented, elite field on Sunday, March 5, 2017. Mocko, age 30, has competed five previous times on the race's fast point-to-point 26.2-mile course. He won NVM in 2011, 2012, and 2015 and placed second in 2014. In 2013 he placed 10th. Only one athlete to date has won NVM four times: Mary Coordt (Elk Grove, Calif.) who ran away with women's victories in 1997, 2005, 2009, and 2010. Today, Coordt serves as NVM's Elite Athlete Recruiter and Coordinator.

"The Napa Valley Marathon is near and dear to me," Mocko said. "I can't think of a better combination of a challenging, but fast, course. The race offers beautiful scenery, great event organization, and the best prize for winners under the sun. And, the timing of the race has always fit well into my training schedule."

NVM rewards the male and female overall winners with their weight in premium Napa Valley wine. Open and masters winners also win specially etched bottles of Napa Valley wine as trophies to commemorate their status as Road Runners Club of America Western Regional Marathon champions.

Mocko's personal best time for the marathon distance is 2 hours, 22 minutes, and 36 seconds, a mark that he set at the 2015 California International Marathon. Last year, Mocko changed his focus from road running to trail running and ultra runs (races beyond the traditional 26.2-mile marathon distance) and finished the revered Western States 100-Mile Endurance run as 7th place male with a time of 17 hours, 1 minute, and 47 seconds. A week ago, Mocko left his full time job as International Product Lead at Square, Inc. in San Francisco to totally focus on his running.

For this year's NVM, Mocko has set a particularly formidable challenge for himself. He plans an ambitious "double" where he'll compete in the Way Too Cool 50K (32 miles) trail run in California's Sierra Nevada mountains on Saturday, March 4th. Then he'll run NVM the very next day. Last year, he competed in the Way Too Cool race and finished 8th male but took a one-year hiatus from NVM.

"I've decided that racing in Way Too Cool again this year is a priority which means I'll have a muddy 50K on Saturday morning and then about 20 hours to recover before toeing the line in Napa on Sunday," Mocko said. "I know I'm fit enough to run in the low-to-mid 2:20s at Napa, but I'm uncertain about how I'll bounce back with 31 miles of trail running in my legs from the day before."

The superb NVM men's course record of 2:16:20 was set in 1987 by U.S. National Distance Running Hall of Fame member Dick Beardsley. Beardsley, who is now a frequently invited guest speaker at NVM's Marathon College held the day before the race, will be honored at this year's NVM on the 30th anniversary of his record. (See more details below.)

"I don't imagine Dick's course record will be broken for quite some time," Mocko commented. "That's an incredibly impressive time on Napa's course."

NVM's gently-rolling course has stayed the same for the entire 38-year history of the event. The course is certified (for accurate distance) by USA Track & Field (the U.S. governing body for the sports of distance running, track and field, and race walking).

**Lupe Cabada** (31, Reno, Nev.) will also contend for the 2017 NVM men's overall title. He returns to NVM for the third time. In fact, Cabada's first-ever marathon was in 2012—at Napa—where he finished 9th in 2:43:26, well behind Mocko's winning 2:24:38. He returned to Napa the following year and improved his time to 2:39:31, finishing 12th. He set his personal record of 2:32:09 at the 2015 Chicago Marathon. Now, he would like to improve that mark by six minutes when he lines up at NVM's starting line. Cabada began running when he was in junior high school and was a standout in cross country and track at Lowry High School in Winnemucca, Nev. Today, he is a co-owner and co-head coach at Reno Distance Training, a business devoted to training athletes from 800 meters to marathon distances. He also coaches track and cross country at Damonte Ranch High School in Reno.

On the women's side, **Erica Weitz** (28, Orlando, Fla.) is traveling to the scenic Napa Valley for her first Kaiser Permanente Napa Valley Marathon. Weitz has completed eight marathons to date, including three Boston Marathons. Her personal best marathon time of 2:47:58 which she ran in 2015 at Grandma's Marathon in Minnesota—makes her a definite contender for the 2017 NVM winner's podium. She hopes to improve to 2:44:15 at Napa. Weitz ran throughout childhood, middle school, high school, and college. She attended the University of Central Florida where she competed in cross country and

indoor and outdoor track. Her ultimate goal is to qualify for the 2020 U.S. Olympic Women's Marathon Trials race.

"My father was a 2:32 marathoner and his success was always an inspiration to me," Weitz said. "I couldn't wait until I was able to run my first marathon. I never stopped training, even after college. To this day, the marathon is my favorite event because I believe it's the most challenging and rewarding, and it's the race where I can be the most competitive. I'm ecstatic to be able to compete at my favorite race distance in my dream destination of Napa Valley."

**Lindsey Hintz** (34, Park City, Utah) will also line up at the NVM starting line for the first time and contend for a women's victory. NVM will be Hintz's second foray into the marathon distance. She made her marathon debut at the 2015 Los Angeles Marathon, finished in 2:59:47, and later was diagnosed with very low iron which has since been corrected.

"I finally feel great and I'm excited to race another marathon and PR at Napa," Hintz said.

Hintz is hoping for a finish time in the 2:46:00 range at NVM which would give her a definite shot at victory. The current NVM women's course record of 2:39:37 was turned in by Devon Crosby-Helms in 2012.

#### **Additional Race Weekend Events:**

At the Napa Valley Marathon's annual *Marathon Colledge*, held the day before the race, a panel of running experts will discuss and celebrate the 35th anniversary of Dick Beardsley's epic "Duel in the Sun" with Alberto Salazar at the 1982 Boston Marathon and the 30th anniversary of Beardsley's superb NVM men's course record of 2:16:20 which he set at the 1987 race—a record that still stands.

The *Marathon Colledge* is scheduled for Saturday, March 4th from 10 a.m. to approximately 3 p.m. at the **Napa Valley Marriott Hotel & Spa**. The "Duel in the Sun & Course Records" panel discussion takes place from 12 to 1:30 p.m. NVM weekend also includes a Sports and Fitness Expo on Friday, March 3rd from 1 p.m. to 6 p.m. and Saturday, March 4th from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the Marriott. Both the Marathon Colledge and Sports and Fitness Expo are free for the general public.

The unique 90-minute "Duel in the Sun & Course Records" panel discussion will feature the following special guests:

#### **Dick Beardsley** (guest of honor)

This accident-prone Minnesotan was half of the classic "Duel in the Sun" (with Alberto Salazar) at the 1982 Boston Marathon. Beardsley and Salazar battled together, stride-for-stride, over the last nine miles of the race with Salazar out-kicking Beardsley in the final 100 yards. Beardsley still holds the seventh fastest marathon time by a U.S. athlete (2:08:54) and was co-winner of the first London Marathon in 1981. Beardsley later endured a series of horrific farm and traffic accidents that nearly claimed his life but he rebounded to run marathons again. He set the Napa Valley Marathon course record in 1987 in order to qualify for the 1988 U.S. Olympic Marathon Trials. He dedicates much of his year to providing inspirational and motivational speeches around the world.

#### **Joe Henderson** (moderator)

A former editor of *Runner's World* (1970-77), Joe Henderson is a prolific author, having written two dozen books on running and fitness. He was the Road Runner Club of America's Journalist of the Year in 1979 and 1997—making him the only person to receive this distinction twice—and he has been a member of the RRCA Hall of Fame since 1979. He is highly regarded within the running community and has devoted recent years to coaching citizen runners to make the marathon their event. He lives in Eugene, Ore.

#### **William "Doc" Wenmark** (one of Dick's coaches)

Coach Bill served as Dick Beardsley's coach and mentor when Dick came off a series of devastating injuries that would have ended a lesser man's running career. He orchestrated Beardsley's comeback at the 1987 Napa Valley Marathon and trained him to qualify for the 1988 U.S. Olympic Marathon Trials. Doc Wenmark was a corpsman in Vietnam, and leveraged his experience there into founding the Now Care Medical Centers in the Minnesota northlands. He is a national leader in urgent care medicine. Wenmark is the founder of the ALARC Running Club, and has trained nearly 4,000 first-time marathoners. Only three of these runners failed to finish their first marathon. Wenmark has run 104 marathons and ran the Leadville 100-miler seven times. He had a marathon personal best of 2:49:39.

#### **John Brant** (author)

John Brant is a long-time writer-at-large for *Runner's World* magazine and is a contributor to publications such as *Outside* and *The New York Times* magazine. He is the author of *Duel in the Sun: Alberto Salazar, Dick Beardsley, and America's Greatest Marathon*, and, most recently, *The Boy Who Runs: The Odyssey of Julius Achon*. Brant collaborated with Frank Shorter on his memoir *My Marathon: Reflections on a Gold Medal Life*. Several of Brant's stories have appeared in Best American Sports Writing anthologies. He lives in Portland, Ore.

#### **Reg Harris** (former race director)

For 15 years Harris served on NVM's Board of Directors and was intimately involved in bringing Dick Beardsley to the race in 1987 when Beardsley set the course record. Harris was a competitive track and road racer for more than 30 years. From 1970 to 1972 he coached distance runners on Tunisia's national track and cross country teams for international competitions, including the 1972 Munich Olympics. His runners and teams won two International Military Sports Council (CISM) world cross-country championships, seven gold medals at the 1971 Mediterranean and Maghreb Championships, and a silver medal in the 1972 Olympic Games. He is also the author of *The Part-Time Runner* (1984). Harris retired from running in 1993 and is now an avid cyclist.

The 2017 Kaiser Permanente Napa Valley Marathon starts on Sunday, March 5th at 7:00 a.m. sharp in Calistoga on the Silverado Trail near the intersection of Rosedale Road. The 26.2-mile road course runs the length of the beautiful Silverado Trail and finishes at Vintage High School in north Napa. The male and female winners will earn coveted first place prizes: their weight in fine Napa Valley wine. The 2017 edition of NVM has again been selected by the Road Runners Club of America as its Western Regional Marathon Championship, a designation it has received in eight of the past nine years.

Entry slots are still available for both the marathon and the companion Kiwanis Club of Greater Napa 5K Run, which starts (8 a.m.) and finishes at Vintage High School on marathon morning.

Every Napa Valley Marathon participant assists important local causes. All proceeds from the Napa Valley Marathon, a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization, are donated to local charities and schools in the Napa Valley region. In addition, an independent economic impact analysis commissioned by the marathon in 2012 estimated that the local economic impact of NVM is approximately \$3 million annually in direct spending.

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For more information about the Kaiser Permanente Napa Valley Marathon, please visit the marathon's web site at [www.napavalley-marathon.org](http://www.napavalley-marathon.org).

The Napa Valley Marathon appreciates generous sponsor support from Kaiser Permanente/Thrive, Whole Foods Market, ASICS, Road Runners Club of

America, USA Track & Field, MarathonFoto, Napa Valley Marriott Hotel & Spa, Running USA, Legendary Napa Valley, Andretti Winery Napa Valley, KPIX CBS5 and KBCW, XFINITY, KVVN/99.3 The Vine, KVON 1440 AM, KCBS AM and FM Radio, Gatorade, Peet's Coffee & Tea, Essentia, and Southgate Mini Storage.

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