

Route 66 Marathon: Iranian immigrant serves as inspiration for women

■ The record-setting runner serves as an inspiration for females in her native country.



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By KEVIN HENRY World Correspondent |
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For Parvaneh Moayed, the Williams Route 66 Marathon on Sunday isn't just another event. It's a chance for her to keep inspiring people around the world.

Moayed, born in Zanjan, Iran, will bring an impressive resume to Tulsa for her first Williams Route 66 Marathon. The event will be her 450th lifetime marathon and the 178th in which she has competed in 2013.

She holds the Guinness World Record for women in that category and is planning to establish two more records by the end of the year, as she will have participated in marathons every day between Halloween and New Year's Day.

"I'm really excited about running in Tulsa for the first time," said Moayed, who lives in San Antonio and organizes marathons. "I always

have goals when I run, but I adjust them on the day of the race depending on the situation and how I'm feeling. My time can range anywhere from five to seven hours, but I'm going to go out there and give it my all."

Moayed immigrated to the United States in 1979 at the age of 17 to begin college at a time when American and Iranian relationships were at rock bottom. She has not returned to Iran since then, partially because she would not be allowed to run freely as she can in the United States. The running clothes that have become part of her daily routine would not be allowed in public.

But Moayed's presence is still felt in Iran and serves as an inspiration to young women,

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many who yearn to follow in her running footsteps.

"It's always been a dream of mine to return to Iran and have a race there that would allow women to run freely," Moayeddi said. "Through emails, I hear from women who are starting to run in Iran. I want to be able to inspire them and touch their lives in a positive way."

Part of that inspiration comes from Moayeddi's completion of the Badwater Ultramarathon in July. Known as the world's toughest foot race, the event covers 135 miles nonstop from Death Valley to Mount Whitney, Calif., in temperatures up to 130 degrees. Fewer than 100 runners are accepted for the race each year, and Moayeddi trained for it by running in San Antonio's summer heat wearing winter clothes.

"After over 46 hours of running ... they announced at the finish line that I was the first Iranian woman to attempt and finish the Badwater Ultramarathon," Moayeddi said. "That was an intensely emotional moment for me, as I realized that not only was I accomplishing a dream for myself but also for women who are held back from reaching their potential."

Williams Route 66 Marathon

Saturday: The 5k run and walk begins at 8 a.m., the fun run starts at 9 and the Mascot Dash begins at 9:30. The three races begin near the corner of Archer Street and Elgin Avenue and end at Guthrie Green.

Sunday: The marathon, half marathon and marathon relay begin at 8 a.m. at Seventh and Main streets. The races end at Guthrie Green.

Registration: Sign-up for all races closed Nov. 17.

Expo: The Williams Route 66 Marathon Health, Fitness and Sustainability Expo takes place from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. Friday and 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturday at the Cox Business Center. The Expo features race packet pickup, sports and fitness vendors, and a holiday market.

Information: route66marathon.com

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