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CITY OF DUNKIRK, MAYOR PATRICE VERGRIETE TO DEDICATE STADIUM IN HONOR OF BOSTON MARATHON LEGEND, AMERICAN LONG-DISTANCE RUNNING CHAMPION AND WOMEN’S SPORTS ICON KATHRINE SWITZER
Kathrine Switzer to Travel to Dunkirk, France to Participate in Ceremonies

DUNKIRK, France – September 4, 2019 – The City of Dunkirk (France) will honor American long-distance running pioneer and United States Women’s Hall of Famer [Kathrine Switzer](#) on September 14-15, 2019 when the Dunkirk City Council and Mayor Patrice Vergriete officiate and dedicate “Stade d’Athlétisme Kathrine Switzer” (“**Kathrine Switzer Stadium**”) during official inauguration ceremonies for the athletics stadium.

Switzer, the 1967 Boston Marathon icon who broke gender barriers in sports by creating global empowering running opportunities for women, was chosen for the naming honor because, according to Mayor Patrice Vergriete, she reflects the same determination and fearlessness of the city of Dunkirk: “Eighty percent of the City of Dunkerque was destroyed during World War II. Our city never gave up during this tumultuous time. Through you, as a woman, a sportswoman, a journalist and writer who also never gives up, we would like to honor all of those who make women’s rights progress, and struggle to defeat those who deny your rights. We want to highlight the emancipation values and the universal meaning of sport. These are values to which Dunkerque and I personally are very committed,” said Vergriete.

“Dunkirk is the global epitome of persistence and bravery,” said Switzer. “To be honored in this light by this city is a unique and sacred privilege and tribute. I am extremely grateful to the City of Dunkirk and Mayor Vergriete. But, I am most grateful for every young girl and boy, who, when they come to this stadium, might be inspired to persist and defy expectations.”

“Kathrine Switzer made a very strong and symbolic statement when she competed in the 1967 Boston Marathon and paved the way for women to compete in long-distance running events, athletics and all of sport,” added Vergriete in dedicating the landmark stadium in Switzer’s honor. “Now, we honor Ms. Switzer with the same goal of providing **all** the people of Dunkirk with a first-class facility to practice athletics and live a healthier lifestyle.”

Details of the stadium include:

- The new Kathrine Switzer Stadium is “dedicated to the practice of athletic disciplines” as it includes a 400-meter and eight-lane track, a 145-meter straight-away for sprint races, throwing areas for javelin, discus and hammer competition and areas for high-jump, triple-jump, long-jump and pole vaulting.
- The facility has been sanctioned by the French Athletics Federation.
- While the stadium is home to three Dunkirk Clubs (USD Athletics, Unirun and Triathlon 59 as the main occupants), it is open to non-licensed individuals and school children learning the disciplines of athletics.

“I am extremely proud to have my name forever associated with Dunkirk and I encourage all the people in the city to take full advantage of this first-class facility for years to come – youth in

particular, but also people of my age and older, since it's never too late to begin," said Switzer, 72, who will travel to Dunkirk and participate in the festivities. This includes the dedication ceremonies and "**Boucles Dunkerquoises**," a series of road races at nine different distances. Switzer plans to jog the 5K event.

Events include:

- September 14: At 11:15, unveiling of a plaque that "ratifies the name of the new facility" as the Kathrine Switzer Stadium. At Noon, Switzer will meet with the media.
- September 14: At 17:30, Switzer will conduct a lecture entitled, "Kathrine Switzer, Boston 1967: The American Athlete Who Revolutionized Women's Sport," offered free-of-charge at the Dunkirk Library. The conference will focus on the 1967 story of Switzer's challenging experience but will highlight the empowerment of women through sport, the overall struggle for women's rights and making positive social change.
- September 15: At 10:30, Switzer, wearing her iconic bib number 261, will take part in a series of nine road races staged for runners of all ages and for all distances. She is scheduled to run in the "5 km of the Loops" road race.
- September 15: At approximately 11:00 to Noon, Switzer will sign autographs and take pictures with race participants who wish to have their official race bib or t-shirts signed and take pictures.

On the proposal from Mayor Vergriete, the City of Dunkirk, on March 21, voted to name the new stadium in Kathrine Switzer's honor. On May 16, the facility opened for trial use and on June 16, the new stadium was officially opened with a symbolic relay race organized by the city with support from the three Dunkirk-based running clubs. The September 14-15 inauguration ceremonies and road races will complete the official opening ceremonies and the stadium will be in full operation, including recent installation of 300-seats for spectators, 80 new parking spaces and new plans for dressing rooms to be built in 2020.

About Kathrine Switzer

An iconic athlete, author, Emmy Award-winning commentator and advocate for sports and social causes, Kathrine Switzer was the first woman to officially enter and then run the Boston Marathon. Switzer has been honored for her achievements, including her running the Boston Marathon 2017 on the 50th anniversary of her historic run in 1967 and for her induction to the USA National Women's Hall of Fame which recognized her for creating positive social change throughout her storied career. This included creating women's running events in 27 countries for over a million women and leading the drive to make the women's marathon an official event in the Olympic Games (1984). The ramifications of this work **are** both joyful and profound, changing forever the face of sports **and** health. **By** creating opportunities for women around the world, Switzer has fearlessly empowered millions beyond the finish line. This is now all activated through the recently launched non-profit *261 Fearless*, aptly named after her now famed 1967 bib number, which was retired with honor by the Boston Athletic Association in a ceremony following her 2017 race.

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