

► SCOREBOARD:

These marathoners are running for lives

Six transplant recipients tackle Big Apple

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Associated Press

NEW YORK — Ketil Moe is not sure he'll make it to the finish line of the New York City Marathon. Simply making it to the starting line will be a huge accomplishment.

He is, after all, running with a new set of lungs.

Moe is one of six transplant recipients who plan to run the marathon on Sunday. He most likely is the first lung recipient to tackle a course this long, according to Dick Traum, president of the Achilles Track Club for disabled athletes.

Moe, a 31-year-old diabetic, had to suck oxygen and use a wheelchair before his double lung transplant in the summer of 1997.

NEW YORK MARATHON "If I can get through the race, I know that I have my disease under control," he said.

Speaking from his home in Kreteansand, Norway, Moe worried that a lingering bacterial infection might prevent him from running.

His doctors warned him not to do it. But they also warned him about many of the 12 marathons he had ran before his transplant, races he sometimes entered with bleeding lungs.

This time he plans to run slowly, with his doctor, his physical therapist and two Norwegian champions — former marathoner Grete Waitz and Johann Olav Koss, an Olympic gold medalist speed-skater.

"I hope I will survive," he said with a slightly wheezing laugh. "It will be the toughest race ever."

Running a marathon is not a good idea for most transplant patients, said Dr. Niloo Edwards, surgical director of heart transplants at Columbia Presbyterian Hospital in New York. But those healthy enough to do it are a symbol of hope for sick people leery of the surgery.

"It's a testament to how well transplantation works in the 1990s and to really how much quality of

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Ketil Moe, who will run the New York Marathon after a double lung transplant

life ... the gift of these organs brings to these patients," Dr. Edwards said.

For Donald Arthur, the transplant itself led him to the marathon. He began race walking to counter the bone atrophy resulting from his anti-rejection drugs.

Traum quickly persuaded him to enter last year's marathon, an event he never cared about before his heart transplant two years ago.

"The only thing I used to do with a marathon was sit in my chair with a beer and a cigarette and the remote control and change the channel because I didn't want to see anyone in that pain and agony," the 54-year-old New Yorker said.

Smoking and drinking, combined with a cocaine habit, made Arthur's already diseased heart grow monstrously large and nearly shut it down.

"I couldn't talk anymore because I was gasping for air," he said. "It took over half an hour for me to walk a city block."

He respects his body now. To do any less would dishonor the 25-year-old man he knows only as Fitzgerald. The man whose heart keeps him alive.

Arthur inspired Maria Jimenez to run after she received a transplant of her mother's kidney.

The 35-year-old free-lance illustrator spent three years suffering through exhaustive dialysis treatments after lupus destroyed her kidneys. Now she wants to make sure she takes full advantage of her mother's gift.

"I just kind of want to feel life again after feeling so limited for so long," she said.