

# Racing the darkness

## Near-blind pol enters marathon

By EMILY GEST  
DAILY NEWS STAFF WRITER

Close your eyes. Keep them closed. Now run.

It sounds nearly impossible. But it's not, as state Sen. David Paterson (D-Harlem) and 50 other visually impaired and blind runners will prove Sunday when they compete in the 30th New York City Marathon.

Running under the auspices of the Achilles Track Club, an international organization that encourages people with disabilities to exercise, Paterson and others will be guided by sighted volunteers throughout the 26.2-mile course.

"I can't believe I'm talking on this subject," said Paterson, 45. His running career began after a chance jog around the reservoir with his wife in April led to a meeting with Dick Traum, the founder of Achilles.

"When he said, 'I think you should run the marathon,' I said, 'You've got to be kidding.'" Paterson recalled.

But his resistance melted away after he met a cancer-stricken volunteer in his Senate office who couldn't fulfill her dream of running the marathon. "I realized I was very blessed to have the choice to do it," he said.

After participating in twice-weekly Achilles workouts, Paterson improved his endurance and his confidence.



**A CHALLENGE** State Sen. David Paterson, who is legally blind, trains in Central Park.

JENNIFER S. ALTMAN

One day there weren't enough Achilles volunteers to accompany runners around the park, so Paterson, who can see just 15 feet ahead in one eye, was drafted to accompany another sight-impaired runner. The pair ran nearly 6 miles, with Paterson nudging his partner in one direction or another as they ran.

"Getting him around that park was the thrill of my life," said Paterson, a state senator for 14 years. "My whole thing has been to fit in and never reveal that I had other problems. [Running] has changed my life."

Even though he has gotten lost in Central Park when he has run by himself, Paterson said he isn't worried that his volunteer will conk out. If she does, he said, he'll just find someone near him and run beside that person.

Carl Frederick Minor, a 33-year-old blind Brooklynite, is just as confident about his marathon run — his sixth.

"I'm more nervous about missing a bus to get there or not having enough sugar," said Minor, who has run with John Campbell for several years.

They're so in sync, Minor said, that they move and breathe similarly. They run with Minor's left arm tethered to Campbell's right arm. Campbell then moves his own arm in the direction he wants Minor to move.

Minor wouldn't dream of not running. "I have to have that freedom," he said. "It's therapeutic for me physically and mentally." When he runs, Minor said, "I'm in a state where no one knows that I'm blind. They don't patronize me."

For Wieslaw Miecz, 45, who traveled from Warsaw to compete in Sunday's endurance contest, running is a way of challenging himself. With each of the 40 marathons he has completed, he has tried to better his performance. He hopes to run the race in 2 hours, 48 minutes.

"I am afraid [about] how well I will perform," Miecz, who is visually impaired, said through a translator. "Fear [also] comes with such big crowds. That's kind of scary and overpowering. "To be honest, I will just try to think as little as possible."

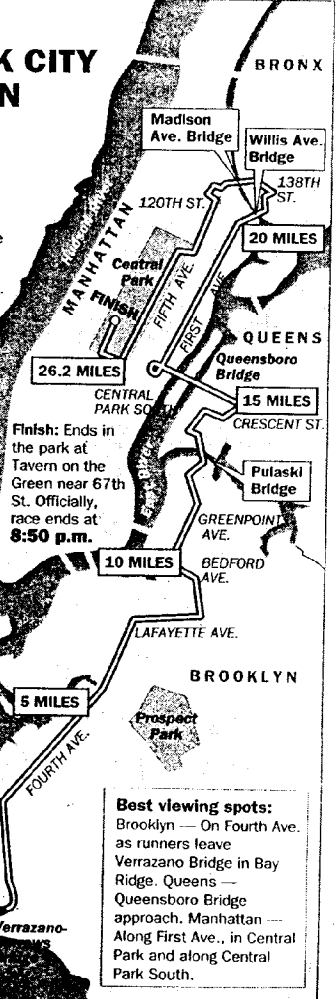
## THE 30TH NEW YORK CITY MARATHON

Distance: 26.2 miles

Start: 10:50 a.m., Staten Island side of the Verrazano Bridge.

Number of runners: 30,000

Number of countries represented: 115



Finish: Ends in the park at Tavern on the Green near 67th St. Officially, race ends at 8:50 p.m.

**Best viewing spots:**  
Brooklyn — On Fourth Ave. as runners leave Verrazano Bridge in Bay Ridge. Queens — Queensboro Bridge approach. Manhattan — Along First Ave., in Central Park and along Central Park South.

The New York City Marathon will be broadcast live on WNBC-TV Channel 4 beginning at 10 a.m. and ending at 3 p.m.

Atlantic Coast

## Street to be named for hate victim

The Brooklyn street where Michael Griffith grew up soon will bear his name.

Griffith, 23, was killed Dec. 20, 1986, when a gang of white men chased him onto the Shore Parkway in Howard Beach, Queens, where he was struck by a car. Griffith was black. The incident — which then-Mayor Ed Koch likened to a lynching — drew national attention to the state of the city's race relations.

Three of Griffith's attackers got long prison terms for manslaughter; others were prosecuted on riot charges.

Yesterday, a City Council committee paved the way for a portion of Pacific St. between Albany and Raiph Aves. in Bedford-Stuyvesant to be named Michael Griffith St. Council is expected to approve the measure Wednesday.

Jean Griffith-Sandford, Griffith's mother, said the name change would help teach young people "that we are all God's children, and that we should not hate and fear one another, but learn to love and live in unity."

Frank Lombardi