

MARATHON

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## Brazilian Wins Achilles In Rainy Prospect Park

By DAVID KOEPEL

The Brazilian wheelchair racer Carlos Roberto Oliveira overcame a treacherous, rain-drenched course in Prospect Park yesterday to win the second Achilles Marathon in Brooklyn. The conditions stymied some competitors, who slipped and slid across the hilly terrain at noticeably slower speeds than in dry weather.

The weather caused Kamel Ayari, a past winner of the New York City Marathon's wheelchair race, to bow out of the race, saying the slippery course was too dangerous to navigate. The 26.2-mile course consisted of eight laps around the park.

About 57 wheelchair competitors from more than 20 countries participated in the race, about 40 percent of those who had registered. Approximately 500 disabled and able-bodied athletes also completed the marathon or marathon relays. The Achilles Track Club sponsors racing events and trains disabled runners.

For Oliveira, 41, it was an especially sweet victory, his first in a New York race. His dream of competing in the Paralympics were dashed earlier this year when he broke his right leg in three places.

Oliveira finished the Prospect Park race in 2 hours 21 minutes 47 seconds, although the rain made grasping his chair's wheels difficult. He said that in better weather he would have finished in 1:45.

"This was a very important race for me," he said through a translator. "In Brazil the disabled are not seen as part of society. This gives me the feeling that I am part of something and that the disabled can join and win like anybody else."

Though many participants said that the race was more organized than last year's chaotic debut, it was not without mix-ups.

Officials initially declared Resterero Arnaldo of Ecuador the winner of the push-rim wheelchair division, though he was operating a hand-crank chair. He had apparently failed to notify officials when he switched to a hand-crank chair, a faster-moving chair, before the race.

Several racers lost count of how many laps they had completed and headed to the finish line, only to be waved back out by officials.

For the second consecutive year Helene Hines, 53, of Lido Beach, N.Y., won the women's hand-crank division, improving her 2001 time of 2:02:26 to 1:58:56. Bogdan Krol, 46, of Poland, shrugged off the bad weather and the steep climbs to win the men's hand-crank division in 1:41:39, defeating the American Ken Archer by only eight seconds.

"It's April and we can expect this type of weather," Krol said. "This trail requires eight uphill climbs, which are difficult for some, but not for me."