

I'm a Runner



David Paterson

New York Governor
54, Albany

Interview by
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Photograph by BEN BAKER

Running has given me the chance to be athletic. When I was a teenager, my friends played sports that I couldn't play [Paterson is legally blind with only partial sight in his right eye]. So even though I didn't get into running until my 40s, it got me in the game.

In April 1999 [Achilles Track Club founder] Dick Traum asked me if I'd be a

“ Whenever they introduce me at events and say that I ran the marathon, the audience just starts cheering. ”

spokesperson for the club—but to be it, I'd have to do the New York City Marathon. My wife, Michelle, is an avid runner. When I told her that I was thinking about running the marathon, her first thought was to tell me *not* to; she knew it would be the fastest way to get me to do it.

When I finished the race [in 6:06:00], I had to go to the hospital; I'd become hypothermic. My body temperature was 94 degrees and my heartbeat was, like, 58 or something. After I recovered, I shied away from running for a while before I realized that it was something I was good at. Now, I run pretty regularly.


I run more for distance. Eleven-minute miles are about my speed, although I like to take off at the end of a race and finish as fast as I can. For some reason I find it amusing to catch people at the end.

I did the Utica Boilermaker 15-K last July [in 1:35:21]. I'd heard there was a hill somewhere on the course—that is the most inaccurate description I've ever heard. It's all hills.

I hum music to myself while I run, usually old disco tunes, or inspirational songs like "I Will Survive" and the *Rocky* themes, or some old TV themes like *Hawaii Five-O* and "Secret Agent Man."

It's difficult being disabled in this country—only 37 percent of us are working—so being able to have a goal and reach it means a lot. It does for me. I get a real feeling of achievement from running.

I'm one of the only people from Achilles who has run with a guide and as a guide. I once led a blind runner through four miles in Central Park.

I'm up for reelection in 2010. I'll be running when I'm running. 



For the full interview and more photos, see runnersworld.com/imarunner.

→ PATERSON, NEW YORK'S FIRST AFRICAN-AMERICAN GOVERNOR, CAME INTO OFFICE IN 2008, FOLLOWING ELIOT SPITZER'S RESIGNATION.