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At the NYC Marathon (l. to r.): Matt Connors, Alex Schneider, Philip Lang and trainer Kevin McDermott celebrate Alex's New York City Marathon performance.

## Local Brothers Run To National Attention

BY ANDY NEWMAN

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Now Alex and Jamie Schneider, the 23-year-old severely autistic identical twins long distance runners from Great Neck, can add the New York City Marathon to their list of inspiring athletic accomplishments.

Both boys completed the Nov. 3 race and Alex's 3:14:36 was his personal best marathon time. The brothers, who have run in over 120 races, including twice in the Boston Marathon, received widespread national and international attention on the day of the race and the family was featured on ABC Television's national and local news coverage and the next day on *Good Morning America*. At last count, their story had been linked on almost 40 sites on the Internet. This was their first New York City Marathon.

There were about 350 athletes with disabilities who participated in the race. Alex's time was the second fastest, just behind a Chilean runner, who is blind. Achilles International, which helped the twins gain entry into the Marathon, had 116 total entries and Alex's time was the best among them.

"It's beyond thrilling," said Robyn Schneider, the boys' mother. "To see my boys who are so affected by autism having such a wonderful accomplishment is beyond words. It makes me cry every time I think of it."

Jamie, who runs with a different purpose, took his time during the race and finished in just under eight hours. His father, Allan, who is afflicted by multiple sclerosis, ran with him. Three other runners, including his trainer of seven years, Kevin McDermott, accompanied Alex.

As exhilarating as the experience was for the Schneider family, there was a moment of concern. At one point, Robyn lost track of Jamie's progress and became quite anxious even though her husband had a cell phone with him.

"I was terribly worried," she said. "I didn't know what to think. It turned out that someone in the crowd had upset Jamie with a loud bullhorn and he got really upset with that. So they had to stop for a while and just walk. I think it reminded him of what happened in Boston this year."

Jamie was running with his father in April and was about four miles from the finish line that day when the explosions happened. Alex finished his race some 45 minutes before the trouble, turning in his previous best time of 3:23:22. The Schneiders feel strongly that the tragedy affected Jamie and his desire to continue running activities. Overcoming that obstacle and Jamie's stopping at every water stop slowed his race time in New York.

"Jamie likes to shake hands with people," his mother added. "He likes to be social."

Of Alex's performance, she said: "When I saw Alex I was ecstatic. I couldn't believe what a great race he ran. I cried. I was just so proud of him. He looked so happy. He can't express himself and he doesn't even know how good he is. He just loves to run."

The Schneiders have been flooded with phone calls, emails and requests by the media since the race and are looking to return to Boston next April to have the boys run the course again.