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One Run for Boston ends on a heartfelt note

Hundreds take part in final stretch

By Matt Rocheleau and Derek J. Anderson | GLOBE CORRESPONDENTS JUNE 30, 2013

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ARAM BOGHOSIAN FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

Marathon bombing victim John Odom was escorted across the finish line of One Run for Boston by his daughter Nicole Reis.

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Nicole Reis approached the Boston Marathon finish line in Copley Square holding the baton aloft as her father, John Odom, and other jovial spectators proudly cheered her on a few feet away from a sidewalk along Boylston Street.

Much of the scene matched how it was supposed to have happened 2½ months ago, except most noticeably the time — about 12:45 a.m. Monday — and that Odom sat in a wheelchair.

His leg was severely injured by one of two bombs that exploded near the finish line as he stood waiting to see his daughter, who was stopped by race organizers before she could ever complete the race.

But, early Monday morning, he was wheeled out to join her at the end of the course and they crossed the yellow-and-blue painted finish line together.

Reis was one of hundreds of runners to stream across the

finish line on the last leg of the One Run for Boston, a coast-to-coast, nonstop relay race organized to raise money for those affected by the Boston Marathon bombings.

After more than 1,000 runners cut through countrysides and cityscapes, the last leg of the 3,300-mile relay race finished in Copley Square nearly 24 days after it began.

“This is what we came from California for, to be able to see this moment,” Odom said. “She’s so excited and I’m so glad to be here.”

The relay called for runners all over the country to sign up for one of more than 300 sections mapped out across 14 states. Starting in Los Angeles, each section had a specific length, where numerous participants could join in and run together. Most were about 10 miles long.

From Hopkinton onward, the final 26.2-mile stretch of the relay followed the exact Boston Marathon route. About 650 runners registered for the 319th and final leg from Newton, which was about six times as many participants as any other part of the race.

Kate Treleaven, an organizer of the massive charity race, said many people joined the relay, which was great for fundraising, but had slightly slowed the running pace, causing it to finish several hours behind schedule. The relay had raised more than \$78,000 by 1,962 people, according to the One Run for Boston website Sunday night.

Julie Arrison, 34, of Salem, ran the Boston Marathon in April alongside a close friend. Her friend’s husband and son were in Copley Square, ready to cheer them on, when the explosions occurred. The husband and son suffered serious injuries, Arrison said.

“We spent the weeks after the Marathon helping out the family in any way we could, with hospital visits, coordinating care,” she said.

Like many other runners, Arrison and her friend were not allowed to cross the Marathon’s famous finish line in Copley Square. On Sunday evening, she was not ready to.

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While excited to help out a good cause and to reunite with other runners, she avoided running the relay's final stretch down Boylston Street. Instead, she chose to run a portion from the Marathon starting line in Hopkinton to Framingham.

"It's a little less emotional for me," she said Sunday, shortly before starting her journey. "There are a lot of happy memories associated with the starting line. This was the happy part of the day."

She said she plans to tackle the finish line at the next Marathon.

"It's going to take me a little more time, even in training, and to mentally prepare myself for the emotions that will come next year," Arrison said.

Dan Foley, 31, of Uxbridge, had a similar story. He too ran most of the Marathon, was stopped shy of the finish line, and wanted to partake in the charity relay. But he also wanted to avoid running into Copley Square for now.

"I don't think I'm emotionally ready to see the finish line on Boylston Street. I'm saving that for the next Marathon," said Foley, shortly before his scheduled relay run from Upton to Hopkinton.

"This is a historic event to be a part of, and a good way to help out," he added. "It's something that's very special. It shows that what happened at the Marathon was a ridiculous act that won't stop us."

Erin Joyce, 44, ran 6 miles from Upton, where she lives, to Hopkinton.

Those running that portion of the relay had taken turns carrying the baton, which was nicknamed Miles.

At the end of the stretch, Joyce found herself holding it and, as she reached the Boston Marathon starting line, passed the baton to Dave McGillivray, the Marathon's race director.

"It was just an empowering, good experience and a great feeling to be a part of a bigger cause," she said. "None of us will forget that day."

Cars passing the relay runners honked in support, Joyce said. Some drivers pulled over and got out of their cars to cheer. Others clapped for, waved at, and high-fived the runners.

"I didn't anticipate as much support as we got," Joyce said. "I knew it was going to be good, for a good cause. But when you're actually running it, it was a really great feeling."

Treleaven said many people joined the relay, which was great for fund-raising, but had slightly slowed the running pace.

Arrison said she felt good to participate in the effort.

“Just to see all of us collectively coming together, and it’s for a great cause — the One Fund is going to help a lot of families,” she said.

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