

Adam Quinn

In September when we put on the Last Chance BQ.2 Marathon, an event specifically targeting getting people into the Boston Marathon, many of us were a little puzzled as a 19-year-old runner came across the line at 4:50:09, a full 20 minutes behind our stated cutoff time. We still had the clock running though—we're nice that way. Still, why the kid entered the race was a little curious.



Four months later, and he contacted me asking for an extra shirt, since his mother is making a quilt for him. The punch line to that email will come later.

As I looked up his address to mail the shirt, I found the runner-info story he put on his registration:

Hello, I am an avid distance runner for over 7 years. While I have been diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder and cognitive impairment, this "label" does not define me. My dad helped me fill this out. I have pushed the envelope my entire life and initially face "NO" at every step. However, these hurdles did not stop me and inspired

me to reach even higher. Since I just completed high school this June, I do not have the marathon or half marathon resume you require. I have achieved a 7.3 min mile in my last high school XC race last Oct and I run year long and began marathon training this May after track season ended. I have run over ten mile runs each week since May and been running at least one 15 Mile plus run per week since early July. My resting heart rate is around 42 and still dropping. I will be ready for this September marathon and then intend to apply for Boston marathon. I want to run in Grand Rapids, near my home town, and then to the Boston community to bring awareness to my drive to eliminate segregation in K through college and encourage embracement of full inclusion at any level. Cognitive labels or demonstrated cognitive skill should not be a barrier to entry or a basis for segregation in k-12 or higher learning. Everyone benefits when diversity inclusion is not limited to just those meet certain standards. Segregated classrooms or outright barriers to college and federal financial aid based on high school diplomas, GPS and test scores like ACT, are discriminatory. While these can be a factor in selecting candidates for admission, there should still be a drive for normal distributions if these methods are used. I want to complete my first marathon near my home town to increase community awareness and then the Boston marathon to increase national awareness. My brother graduated from

Harvard last year and I want even schools like Harvard to rethink what diversity means in admissions. I am proud of who I am. Labels do not define me. I will achieve your 4:30 cutoff time or you may pull me from the race before finishing.

Well, he didn't achieve the 4:30, but he was in the final loop by then, so of course we let him finish with an official time. A couple days ago, I got the email from him:

Hi Don



Any chance you have a leftover running shirt from last September? Any size will work. My mom is making a t shirt quilt.

PS My time from this race did qualify me for the Boston Marathon based on cut off for runner with autism. I'm the youngest qualifier from Michigan. Thanks for giving me a chance to run with the elite in GR! I'm training hard for 4/17!

Adam H Quinn

Did you get that?

My time from this race did qualify me for the Boston Marathon based on cut off for runner with autism. I'm the youngest qualifier from Michigan. Thanks for giving me a chance to run with the elite in GR! I'm training hard for 4/17!

Do I have the world's best job or what?!

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