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‘Never too old to be an athlete’: Husband and wife running icons join Marine Corps Marathon weekend



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Kathrine Switzer, center, the first official woman entrant in the Boston Marathon 50 years ago, wears the same bib number after finishing the marathon on Monday, April 17, 2017, in Boston. With Switzer are her husband Roger Robinson, left, and Joann...

WASHINGTON — Running is about putting one foot in front of the other, no matter your age, say Kathrine Switzer and Roger Robinson — a husband and wife team known to many as royalty in the running world.

In 1967, Switzer, now 71, became the first woman to run the Boston Marathon as a numbered entrant. She was nearly tackled midrace by its director for competing at a time when women were barred from the race.

Her husband, 79-year-old Roger Robinson — a masters running pro, running journalist and author — represented England and New Zealand in world championships, set masters marathon records at Boston and New York, and won his age division after a knee-replacement. And he already has running goals after a recent second knee replacement.

“You’re never too old to be an athlete, you’re never too old to try. You’re never too big or too slow or too out of shape to put on a pair of sneakers and start moving,” Switzer said. “And the more you move, the better your health is going to be.”

The couple, who once rooted for Marine Corps Marathon runners when they lived in Vienna, Virginia, is returning as celebrity guests for the 2019 race weekend. This year, they are bringing a message of perseverance and resilience that transcends the sport.

Switzer earned running icon status through her famed 1967 Boston Marathon run. Despite that fact that women weren’t permitted to run, she trained for the race and signed up for under her initials “K.V. Switzer” — “not to defraud the officials, that’s the way I signed my name,” she said.

About a mile and a half in to the marathon, race official Jock Semple saw Switzer running and grabbed her; he tried to pull her off the course and rip off her bib, the number 261, she recalled. That’s when her then-boyfriend Tom Miller, who was running alongside her, rammed Semple, pushing him to the pavement and allowing Switzer to carry on with the race.



Kathrine Switzer, the first official woman entrant in the Boston Marathon 50 years ago, smiles during a news conference, Tuesday, April 18, 2017, in Boston, where her Bib No. 261 was retired in her honor by the Boston Athletic Association. (AP Photo/Elise Amendola)

“It was a moment that really not only changed my life, but changed millions of women’s lives because it really inspired me for change and to create opportunities for women in running,” she said. “I must say, I’m really kind of happy that the worst thing in my life became the best thing in my life because I was able to help get the women’s marathon into the Olympics games, make more women runners in the United States than men ... and spearhead a global movement where women are facing their fearlessness simply by putting one foot in front of the other.”