



Nick Vincent and Phil Sweatman with their marathon medals, the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge hand out water to runners at the 22-mile stage, and athletes at the one-mile point

Pictures: Joe Toth for Virgin Money London Marathon/ Dave Shopland for Virgin Money London Marathon

Marathon pair raise £5k in teen's memory

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It was a real team effort for Ben Hammond on the day of the London Marathon.

The family and friends of the High Halden teenager, who died suddenly last July from an undiagnosed heart condition at the age of 15, lined the streets of the capital to cheer on a running duo.

Phil Sweatman, 45, a service manager for CB Motors in Tenterden, and graphic designer Nick Vincent, 42, ran the London Marathon for Team Ben Hammond.

A group of 40 supporters cheered the men on at various points along the 26-mile course, while money began pouring in to the online appeal in Ben's memory to raise money for Cardiac Risk in the Young (CRY).

The charity carries out screening of youngsters in a bid to prevent the deaths of at least 12 young people in the UK who die each week of undiagnosed heart conditions.

At the time of going to press, supporters had pledged an amazing £5,840.63 on the duo's fundraising page, with a whopping £1,000 received between Friday night and the marathon on Sunday.

Phil completed the route in 4hrs 15mins 20secs and said he was a little disappointed with his time as he got caught up in crowds at the beginning of the race, while Nick finished in 4hrs 3mins 36 secs.

Ben's dad and mum, Steve and Sheralyn, together with his younger brother Archie, 11, cheered the runners on, and Steve said: "We are so very proud of Phil and Nick for doing this and it was a very



Ben Hammond aged 13 at the wheel of a Land Rover, the car his dad Steve chose for his hearse and the fundraising campaign's logo, left

'Thinking back on all they have achieved brings tears to my eyes'

emotional day yesterday. Even today just thinking back on all they have achieved brings tears to my eyes."

Steve spoke of the couple's "precious, adorable son", and added: "Ben would be shocked, amazed and blown away to know the amount of love and support out there for him.

"I'm sure he was looking down on the runners yesterday rooting for them. He would be immensely proud of them too."

The devoted dad added that he and Sheralyn had been buoyed by the support of the community for their fundraising

efforts in the wake of the heartbreaking, sudden loss of their son.

He added: "We also are overwhelmed by the unfaltering support from our close friends and the wider community, who have been instrumental in making all these events a success.

"It certainly helps me get out of bed in the morning and stay positive knowing that all this support is out there.

"When you hear about all the bad things going on in the world, it's reassuring to know there is still a huge amount of compassion out there.

"Providing as many screening days as we can manage helps me to find some sort of positive out of our tragedy, and this helps to keep his memory alive."

■ There is still time to donate to CRY in memory of Ben Hammond to fund a screening programme for Kent children. To donate, visit <http://bit.ly/2pyTu8x>