

Molly Huddle

Med School Can Wait



Photo by Spencer Allen

Molly Huddle attended Notre Dame High School in Elmira, New York. Her school did not have a cross country program, so Molly did not run cross country until her senior year, when her father coached her as a one-person team. She went undefeated and finished fourth in the Foot Locker Nationals.

At the University of Notre Dame, she was a 10-time All-American. Molly began establishing herself as one of the top talents in collegiate distance running by finishing seventh in the 5000 meters at the 2004 U.S. Olympic Trials.

After graduating from Notre Dame in pre-medicine, Molly considered medical school but decided to pursue her running career further. With a new coach and training program, success didn't come immediately, as she struggled with the increased training load and intensity. But Molly gradually adapted and continued to improve, dreaming of making an Olympic team. After qualifying for the 2008 Olympic Trials,

a nagging calf injury held her to a ninth place finish in the 10,000 meters and a 10th place finish in the 5000 meters. As the pain worsened, it was diagnosed as a torn soleus and discovered that she had one leg longer than the other. She was unable to run for three months and was fitted for a small lift in her left shoe.

The steady improvement continued as she focused on cross country, making three U.S. cross country teams and placing 17th in 2011 in the World Cross Country Championships. Back on the track, she won a U.S. national championship and set the American record in the 5000 meters, in 14:44.76. The penultimate year before the Olympics was a big year that set the stage for Molly to finally make an Olympic team when she capped it off with a national championship at 5000 meters.

In the 2012 Olympic Trials, she ran a controlled race in the 5000 meters to finish as the runner-up. In London, she qualified for the finals of the 5000 meters, finishing 11th with a time of 15:20.29. Molly Huddle gave up medical school and fought through three Olympic Trials to realize a lifelong dream of becoming an Olympian.

Questions for Thought:

1. Molly made a tough decision in postponing medical school. What tough decision have you made?
2. When Molly switched coaches it took her awhile to adapt and become successful. Are you willing to be patient?
3. Molly was a one-person high school cross country team. How difficult would it be to be a one-person team? What are the advantages of being surrounded by a team?