

Lynn Jennings

Drive Ambition

When Lynn Jennings attended Bromfield High School in Massachusetts, she ran on the boys' cross country team because there was no girls' team. Her first year as a freshman, she was last in every race and at all of the practices. That humbling experience helped develop her competitive will and mental discipline, skills that would serve her well in her successful career. Her competitive nature propelled her to improve to become one of the best high school runners in the country.

She went to Princeton University and earned All-American honors and set several school records and had a mixture of success and setbacks. The setbacks only seemed to fire up her determination. As she turned professional, her discipline in training and racing became legendary in track and field circles.

She ran in the 1984 Olympic Trials but fared so poorly she considered giving up running. But in 1984, Lynn witnessed American Joan Benoit win the first women's Olympic Marathon. The victory was especially inspiring for Lynn because not only had she raced Benoit before, she had beaten her.

Lynn thrived in cross country, training through brutal winters in New Hampshire. She won three straight world cross country titles from 1990 to 1992. She made the U.S. Olympic team in 1988 and competed in the Olympic 10,000 meters, finishing in sixth place.

She made her second Olympic team in 1992 and earned a bronze medal in the 10,000 meters at the 1992 Olympics, setting an American record in 31:19.89. She made her third Olympic team in 1996 and ran the 5000 meters in the 1996 Atlanta Olympics.

As a world cross country champion, Olympian, and American record holder, Lynn Jennings ran all the way to the history books as one of the greatest distance runners the U.S. has ever produced.

Questions for Thought:

1. Lynn finished last in every practice and race her first year of running cross country. Would you have continued in that situation?
2. What toughness did Lynn develop from having to compete on the boys' team?
3. Lynn's discipline is legendary. How would you rate your discipline? What steps could you take to be more disciplined?