

Deena Drossin Kastor

Making The Sacrifices

Deena Drossin Kastor's success was not an overnight achievement. She began with age group athletics and continued through high school, where she won three California state cross country titles and two state track titles. She also competed in the Foot Locker Cross Country Championships all four years of her prep career. At the University of Arkansas, she was a four-time SEC Conference champion and an eight-time All-American, but never a national champion. Her collegiate career was good, but not considered exceptional. The outstanding talent she displayed as a high school runner was never realized in college.

After graduation, Deena found herself with a burning desire to continue her training and dreamed of running in the Olympics. An assistant collegiate coach recommended she contact coach Joe Vigil, the outstanding distance coach of Adams State University, Colorado, and Olympic distance teams. At first, Vigil was reluctant to work with Deena and even tried to discourage her from moving to Alamosa. However, Deena was persistent and moved to Alamosa, taking a job as a dishwasher to make ends meet. Her persistence, hunger for high goals, and willingness to relocate to Alamosa, with an altitude of 7,543 feet, persuaded Vigil to coach her. Coach Vigil and Deena formed a successful team and developed mutual respect for one another.

Deena made her first Olympic team in 2004 by finishing second in the U.S. Olympic Trials Marathon. At the 2004 Olympics Games, Deena's brilliant and calculated strategy paid off. As the race unfolded on a challenging course and temperatures in the mid-80s with 50 percent humidity, Deena worked her way up through the field and executed a near-perfect race to earn an Olympic bronze medal in the women's marathon.

She was back at the 2008 Olympics with a goal of improving on her third place finish. At the 5-kilometer mark, she dropped to one knee, holding her right foot. Although she attempted to continue to run, she was forced to withdraw from the race due to a broken foot.

Through her hard work ethic and commitment to training, Deena developed into one of the greatest female runners in United States history.

Questions for Thought:

1. Deena's training included running more than 100 miles per week to finally reach her potential. How will you go about reaching your potential?
2. Deena was willing to relocate to be successful. What things are you willing to give up to reach your goals?
3. Deena's tactical strategy paid off for an Olympic medal. How do you develop your strategy when you go into a competition?