

Racing for the Olympics

Local Olympic hopeful training for Olympics

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The majority of people probably see the Olympics as an event that happens every four years.

But for athletes training to get to the Olympics, like Georgia Southern head cross country coach Turena Johnson Lane, preparing for the Olympics is a commitment they make everyday.

Lane, Statesboro's own Olympic hopeful, dedicates hours of her time each day toward making sure her body is prepared for the United States Olympic Marathon Trials held April 3, 2004 in St. Louis.

Lane earned an opportunity to compete for a spot in the Olympics after qualifying for the trials at the Twin Cities Marathon Oct. 5 in Minnesota.

Her next challenge will be finishing in the top three of 123 runners at the trials, which will feature some of the fastest women in the country. The top three finishers will be eligible for the 2004 Summer Olympics in Athens, Greece.

Simply finding the time

Finding time to train for the Olympics is a task in and off itself, seeing as Lane works 10-12 hours per day as the GSU head cross country coach and assistant track coach, which requires traveling usually two weekends each month during the spring.

Lane also spends time work-

ing in the student union at the Leadership Development office.

On top of her roles at GSU, Lane spends two or more hours a day training.

"It is difficult to work, just having a daily schedule, and finding time to train," said Lane.

"The most difficult part is putting myself first. I want the students and student athletes to have a great experience at Georgia Southern. It's tough to make myself a priority given everything else I want to do for other people."

Despite the demands on her time, Lane makes time to prepare herself for the trials.

Although she isn't currently running because of a knee injury, Lane still spends hours a day making sure her body is in peak physical condition.

Lane is rehabilitating her knee with cross training, which include activities that don't involve impact, such as riding a bike and jogging in the pool. She cross trains for an hour each morning and again in the afternoon for 30-45 minutes.

Full training mode

By January, Lane hopes to be in full training mode and running 75-90 miles per week.

Full training mode means waking up each morning around 6 a.m. and starting the day with a six to eight mile run. She prefers to have her hardest workout in the morning.

"It's a mental thing," said Lane, who is coached by her husband Todd, the head track



MICHELLE BOAEN/staff

Turena Johnson Lane stretches before she begins running. Lane is training in the hopes of being one of the top three finishers in the Olympic trials for the marathon.

coach at GSU. "I like to get up and conquer my biggest physical challenge of the day."

Four or five days a week Lane also runs anywhere from four to six miles in the afternoons. On Sundays, because she has the extra time from not working, Lane usually runs anywhere from 15-22 miles.

She prefers running outside, as opposed to a treadmill.

"I like to feel like I am going

somewhere," said Lane. "It is an intrinsic accomplishment for me to start somewhere and end up somewhere else."

The support of a husband . . . and coach

Todd helps Turena draw up workouts based on his experience as a coach, magazine articles, websites and advice from other runners.

"He does a great job coaching me," said Turena. "For us it's very much a team effort. He is knowledgeable and has the insight into what I need to do as a runner to help me get better."

Aside from his roles as a coach, Todd is also there to support Turena through her training.

"Sometimes its easier to help her through the emotional ups and downs of training being her

husband," said Todd.

More than just running

For Turena Johnson Lane, the training doesn't end with the hours a day she spends running.

There are also plenty of ice baths, massages, stretching, weight lifting and sit-ups that go into developing an Olympic-

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caliber athlete.

Five days a week, Lane spends 15-20 minutes in a 45-degree ice bath after workouts to help flush the lactic acid out of her system to prevent soreness.

The massages Lane aims to get once every two weeks are far from the relaxing massages most people think of in a spa.

"They are usually pretty painful," said Lane. "The muscles are so tight and tense from running so many miles that it really hurts."

Lane also strengthens her body by doing 300-500 sit-ups per day and lifting weights twice a week for half an hour. She emphasizes toning her body by using minimal weight and doing numerous repetitions.

Staying hydrated and making sure she gets eight to nine hours of sleep each night are two additional ways Lane focuses on staying healthy.

Diet, as with any athlete, is another important aspect of Lane's training.

"I don't believe in fad diets," said Lane. "I focus on nutritional benefits and getting the right balance of protein, carbohydrates and fat."

Although she doesn't indulge in chocolate or sodas, Lane doesn't believe in totally cutting out sweets.

"You need treats, but it's a matter of doing it in moderation and making sure you are getting everything you need nutritionally first," said Lane.

Equipment, expenses and support from GSU

Aside from the dedication and commitment, training for the Olympics can be quite an expensive endeavor.

With sponsorships hard to come by, Lane also has to deal with

the financial burden of travel expenses, hotel accommodations, meals and equipment needed for her quest.

With running shoes lasting 300 miles per pair and Lane running nearly 100 miles per week, she usually has to buy new shoes every three weeks, which can be quite costly. "I need to keep my shoes in good shape, because the body is the most important asset, and (shoes) help keep my legs healthy," said Lane.

GSU Public Health professor Dr. Helen Graf knew of the expenses Lane would have and that Lane would be reluctant to ask for help, so Dr. Graf, along with the GSU Exercise Science and Health Science Majors' Club decided to organize a fund raiser for Lane.

The groups hosted a raffle and raised over \$1,000 to help support Lane's training efforts. They presented Lane with a check at the Jingle Bell Reindeer Run Dec. 4 in downtown Statesboro.

"When they presented me with the check, I was overwhelmed by the amount and the support," said Lane. "The part that means the most to me is that so many people have helped, shown their support and understand what I'm doing and all the effort that goes into the Olympic trials."

'As ambassador for Statesboro'

Lane will continue her training through Thursday, April 1 when she leaves for St. Louis.

Although she is training for a shot at the Olympics, Lane is treating it as if she were preparing any normal marathon.

"My focus isn't any different than going into any other race. The focus, dedication and commitment isn't any different," said Lane.

Lane will be on many people's minds as head to the trials, including members of the Statesboro Pacers, a local running group she belongs to.

"I don't think Statesboro realizes what a privilege it is for us to have someone here who is training to qualify for the Olympics," said Debbie Gleason, coordinator for the Statesboro Pacers.

"To qualify for the Olympics is so phenomenal in and of itself. It requires the utmost discipline, inner strength and superior physical ability. Turena possesses all of that along with being a wonderful ambassador for Statesboro."

