

Athlete Profile
Peter Gilmore

PA/USATF Contender Focussed on Olympic Marathon Trials

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For most humans, running a 26.2-mile marathon in a matter of a few hours is unfathomable.

For **Peter Gilmore**, it's his calling.

Since running his first marathon at Chicago in 2002, Gilmore has made his mark on the event. He ran 2 hours, 21 minutes, and 48 seconds for his first time out, a level that most runners can only dream of reaching. He was the first American finisher (8th overall) at this year's cold and rainy Boston Marathon, clocking in at 2:16:41. The 30-year-old San Mateo, Calif. resident's personal best is a sizzling 2:12:45, which he ran at the 2006 Boston event.

Now, Gilmore has an excellent chance to realize a longtime dream: making the U.S. Olympic team.

After graduating from the University of California, Berkeley, where he competed on the track and field squad (5,000 and 10,000 meters) and in cross country, Gilmore decided to dedicate much of his life to running.

"It was something that I didn't think I had reached my potential at. I wanted to keep doing it," he said.

Gilmore trained with the Nike Farm Team at Stanford from 2001 to 2004. It was a good experience for him, but he knew that he needed something more. The club, which has since relocated to Oregon, was primarily composed of middle distance and 5K/10K athletes. Gilmore turned to marathon-running.



Peter Gilmore

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“It wasn’t really working out, so I needed to move up to the marathon if I really wanted to reach my potential,” Gilmore explained. “That was my best bet. I asked [well known exercise physiologist and distance coach] Jack Daniels if he could help me out with a training program for the Chicago marathon. I really liked it. It felt like a natural fit.”

And the rest, as they say, is history. But, at least one more highlight in Gilmore’s chronicle remains.

The Pacific Association/USA Track & Field and national standout is just a few weeks away from the culmination of his training efforts. On November 3, 2007, the U.S. Olympic Team Trials - Men’s Marathon takes place in New York City. The race’s significance is clear. The top three finishers in the marathon race will qualify to represent the United States at the 2008 Summer Olympic Games in Beijing, China.

Challenging Trials

The race starts at Rockefeller Center, with most of the 26-mile course winding through New York City’s Central Park. The event figures to attract at least 150 athletes, a number of them hoping to represent the U.S. in next year’s Summer Olympics.

As Gilmore explained, the competition will not be easy. Only three of the talented world- and national-class top contenders will come away from the Trials satisfied.

“This is the best Olympic trials ever in the U.S. for the men’s marathon,” Gilmore said. “There are about 12 or so guys that are really strong contenders for making the team.”

Gilmore is also attempting to avenge his performance in the previous Olympic Trials (2004), where he finished in eighth place—five precious places away from an Olympic team berth. However, he is confident that his last four years of renewed dedication to the sport, and the training he has received under renowned coach Daniels, will give him a great chance of finishing among the top three this time around.

“That was a softer field than this one [will be],” Gilmore commented about the 2004 trials. “I’m much better in every aspect now, whether it’s physically or mentally. I’m in better shape, have more experience, and I’m just plain faster. The competition’s got [*sic*] a lot tougher, but at the same time I’ve gotten a lot better.”

In particular, Gilmore mentioned trials competitors Abdi Abdirahman (Ariz.) and Ryan Hall (Mammoth Lakes, Calif.) as main threats. Khalid Khannouci (NY) has the top qualifying time for the race (2:07:04). Hall (2:08:24), Abdirahman (2:08:56), and Meb Keflezighi (Mammoth Lakes, 2:09:56) have the next best qualifiers. Gilmore is the eighth fastest qualifier (2:12:45). Whoever ends up earning a spot on the team should represent the U.S. well at next year’s Beijing Olympics.

“It’s going to be so tough to make the U.S. team this year that I think all three guys that make it are going to be contenders for medals,” Gilmore explained. “If I were to make that squad I feel really confident about my chances in Beijing.”

As a whole, though, Gilmore isn’t focusing too much on things he can’t control. A marathon is more than just a test of one’s physical abilities; it’s a mental test that many flat-out fail.

When asked what the best marathon runners all share in common, Gilmore alluded to a combination of factors.



Gilmore's 10 marathons include a 2nd overall, 1st U.S. at '04 CIM

“It’s a hard question,” he said. “It’s an elusive thing. It’s what makes marathons so fascinating. Being out there for two-plus hours, there are a lot of things that can go wrong.

“A lot of it is being in the right shape for your body and making good choices while you’re out there. A lot of things go according to predictions. It’s relatively easy to predict which teams will make the baseball playoffs and stuff like that. It’s easy to predict stuff. The marathon doesn’t work like that at all. It’s hard to predict because there are so many things that can go wrong and so many variables that can trip you up.”

When he’s not running, Gilmore’s life is busy and hectic. He finished his Masters degree in Finance last year. Ultimately, he would like to get into investing and finance management. But, right now he’s entirely dedicated to his marathon training. Besides Jack Daniels, his support crew includes one significant other: Gilmore’s fiancée, Liz Wu, who is a financial advisor.

“She’s been the rock that has supported me over the years,” Gilmore said about Wu. “There were some lean times, let me tell you. You don’t graduate from college and keep running until 30 without having some tough times. It takes a while to get it all sorted out and keep improving, to stay with it, and stay tough.”

Running is Gilmore’s calling, though, and it’s what he loves to do. In the weeks leading up to the trials, Gilmore has relocated to the Center for High Altitude Training at Northern Arizona University in Flagstaff, Ariz., where Daniels is Head Distance Coach. He shares a condo with other talented runners, putting in the daily work in preparation for his big day in New York.

Whether or not he qualifies to represent the U.S. in Beijing, the dedicated marathoner plans to run for the rest of his life. Gilmore is reflective about his athletic occupation. He doesn’t take for granted his combination of natural gifts and hard work ethic that have allowed him to live his Olympic dream.

“It (elite marathon running) takes a little while, a little practice,” Gilmore summarized. “It’s like any profession, you know. This is my job. It’s a pretty damn good job, too.” ■