

Former AU cross country, track standout Corman seeks spot on Olympic marathon team

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Andy Corman has spent most of the last eight years of his life in Alfred, first as a student and standout member of the AU cross country and track and field teams, then as a counselor in the University's Office of Admissions. This month he'll leave the security of his home in Alfred for the West Coast where he'll begin pursuing his Olympic dream. On July 17, Corman, 26, will drive to Aliso Viejo, CA, just south of Los Angeles, where he'll begin training with hopes of qualifying for the Olympic marathon trials and a spot on the U.S. team competing at the 2008 Games in Beijing, China. He and several other Olympic hopefuls are being trained by Scott Slade, former cross country and track coach at the University of Buffalo, SUNY Cortland and SUNY Plattsburgh, who is now coaching at Soka University of America in Aliso Viejo. Corman was a standout distance runner at AU who still holds the school record in the indoor 5,000 meters. After graduation, he joined the Genesee Valley Harriers, a running club based in his hometown of Rochester. He ran his first marathon in the spring of 2003 and did well enough to qualify for the 2004 Boston Marathon. He competed in Boston in 2004, 2005 and 2006 and has qualified to run the event in 2007. "My goal is to qualify for the 2008 Olympic trials and ultimately see how far I can go with my running," Corman said during a recent interview. "This is my dream. I didn't really think it was possible until a couple years ago." John Beck, a fellow member of the Genesee Valley Harriers, suggested Corman send his running resume to Slade and last November, Slade invited Corman and Beck to come to California to train. He credited running coaches from the area, including former AU cross country and track coach Cliff Dubreuil, for encouraging him to pursue his dream. To qualify for the Olympic trials, Corman will need to get his time for the 26.2-mile race down to 2:20 minutes. He has run in four marathons, including each of the last three Boston Marathon races. In this year's Boston Marathon, he completed the race in a personal-best 2:41.00, which placed him 191st of more than 21,000 participants. He'll need to shave 21 minutes from that time just to qualify for the Olympic trials, which will be held in summer 2008. The top three runners at the trials will represent the United States in the marathon in Beijing. "I still don't know if it's possible (to qualify for the Olympic trials) but I'm going to try. I have a ways to go, but I think I can do it," Corman said. "I'm not one to back down from a challenge, and even if it doesn't work out, I'll come back a helluva runner. And Southern California isn't a bad place to train and work." Corman admitted to some apprehension as he prepared to leave Alfred for the West Coast. He had only a part-time job as a lifeguard waiting for him. "It's a huge risk: I'm leaving a good job, a place where I'm known, to go to the other side of the country and live paycheck to paycheck and run. It's a risk, but if I didn't take it, I'd always wonder, 'what if?'" Corman said he won't be discouraged if he doesn't qualify for the Olympic trials and plans to continue running for the Genesee Valley Harriers, regardless. Having not trained very hard for the marathons he has run in, he's anxious to see how he performs after dedicating himself full-time to the sport. "If I don't make the trials or the Games, I won't be disappointed because I know I'll have given it all I had," he said. "Right now, I know I haven't given it my all and I want to see what happens when I do."