

SRA's Conley earns dramatic Olympic berth

*Former UC Davis runner grabs
third in women's 5,000 final*



Photo courtesy of [runnerspace.com](http://www.runnerspace.com) interview following the 800M Olympic Trials semi finals interview:
http://www.runnerspace.com/video.php?video_id=72508

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Kim Conley almost gave up competitive running a few years ago. Tonight, she's an Olympian.

Conley, a member of the Sacramento Running Association's Elite Team, grabbed the third and final Olympic berth in the women's 5,000 meters and attained the required Olympic 'A' standard in dramatic fashion Thursday night.

The former UC Davis standout ran a personal-best 15 minutes, 19.79 seconds to edge crowd favorite Julia Lucas (15:19.83) and Abbey D'Agostino (15:19.98) in a photo finish for third place in the U.S. Olympic Track and Field Trials in Eugene, Ore.

Conley's come-from-behind effort just beat the Olympic 'A' standard of 15:20:00 needed to compete in the Olympic Games in London. Her previous best was 15:24.89.

Julie Culley won the race in 15:13.77, with Molly Huddle second in 15:14.40. Cal's Deborah Maier, from Ponderosa High School, finished 13th in 15:37.56.

Conley, 26, said before the Trials she was encouraged to continue competing after leaving UC Davis by her coach Drew Wartenburg, the Aggies' director of track and field and cross country.

"This has been a three-year project for me," said Conley, who lives in West Sacramento. "I can put a lot of stock in all of the work I've done.

"I'm grateful to Drew, who inspired me to stick with it."

Conley found some financial backing from the Sacramento Running Association, enabling her to step back from her coaching duties as a UC Davis assistant and focus more on training.

"It's really hard, when you don't have any financial support graduating from college," she said. "There's not a lot of options at that level, just a lot of pressure graduating college to have it all figured out.

"SRA, it's awesome what they're doing for athletes."

Orangevale's German Fernandez advanced to the men's 1,500-meter semifinals, running 3:41.33 to post the 12th-fastest time of the 24 qualifiers. The former Oklahoma State standout finished sixth in his heat.

Former Sacramento State star Lea Wallace, who reached the semifinals of the women's 800 meters, did not start in the women's 1,500 meter preliminaries.

The **Sacramento Running Association** is a non-profit organization dedicated to finding ways to encourage people of all ages and abilities to run. The SRA is committed to developing new, quality running events that appeal to a broad variety of runners. SRA events include the California International Marathon, which celebrates its 30th anniversary on Dec. 2. More than 4,000 runners have already registered for the race. Other SRA events include the Lake Natoma Four Bridges Half Marathon, The Super Bowl Sunday 10k Run and the Credit Union SACTOWN Ten-Mile Run. SRA beneficiaries include the American River Parkway, youth fitness programs, local running venues and aspiring young runners.