

Written by John Crumlish
Monday, 03 December 2012 19:42



Australian national team coach Peggy Liddick gave an IG an update on the state of her squad of veteran and newcomers as they prepare for 2013 competitions ranging from the Australian Youth Olympic Festival to the world championships. Pictured: Liddick and Lauren Mitchell celebrate her gold medal on floor exercise at the 2010 Worlds, the first world title for the Australian women.

Australian national team coach **Peggy Liddick** gave an IG an update on the state of her squad of veteran and newcomers as they prepare for 2013 competitions ranging from the Australian Youth Olympic Festival to the world championships.

Liddick, a native of Nebraska, has guided the Australians to a consistent place among the world's best teams since she took over as head coach following the 1996 Atlanta Olympic Games.

Liddick competed in gymnastics and track-and-field at the University of Nebraska before she embarked on her coaching career. As a coach in the U.S., her most successful gymnast was Shannon Miller, whom she coached with **Steve Nunno** at Dynamo Gymnastics in Oklahoma. Miller's accolades included world all-around titles in 1993 and 1994, five medals at the 1992 Barcelona Olympics, and gold medals on balance beam and in the team competition at the 1996 Atlanta Games, among others.

Under Liddick's leadership, the Australian women's team qualified for the last four Olympic Games, where it placed seventh at the 2000 Sydney Games, eighth at the 2004 Athens Games, sixth at the 2008 Beijing Games and 10th at the 2012 London Games.

The Australian team in London included three members of Australia's sixth-place team at the Beijing 2008 Games - **Lauren Mitchell**, **Georgia Bonora** and **Ashley Brennan** – along with **E mily Little**

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and

Larrissa Miller

. 2008 Olympians

Daria Joura

and

Olivia Vivian

also tried for spots on the squad for London.

In world championships competitions, Australia won its only team medal, a bronze, in 2003. Australia's other worlds finishes under Liddick include fifth in 1999, sixth in 2006 and 2010, seventh in 2001, eighth in 2011, and 11th in 1997 and 2007. The next world championships will take place in Antwerp, Sept. 30-Oct. 6, 2013.

Also on Liddick's radar for 2013 is the sixth Australian Youth Olympic Festival that will take place Jan. 16-20 in Sydney. Inaugurated in 2001 as a legacy event of the 2000 Sydney Games, the 2013 edition will include 17 sports in which 1,700 athletes from 30 countries will compete. (Though originally held every two years, the competition will now take place every four years.)

IG spoke with Liddick this week to assess the state of her team and forecast its prospects for the coming year.

IG: Your team in London, and the contenders for your team in general, included lots of veteran talent. How difficult was it for you to choose among so many experienced gymnasts who had served the team well in previous Games and other big competitions?



Liddick watches an Aussie gymnast warm up on beam

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PL: It was really nice that the returning veterans wanted to still be in their gyms and part of the national team. I felt the selected gymnasts were the ones who completed the needs of our team and showed the most consistency in training and competitions, so that was the main criteria for their selection. It is always difficult come selection time, but I feel the gymnasts and personal coaches are well informed and were aware of their standings at any time.

IG: Of the London squad, which gymnasts will continue in 2013?

PL: I have not yet asked for a full commitment to the national team. I wanted the team to have enough downtime and I have given them the responsibility to let me know when they are ready to begin training again for national team assignments or for the 2013 World Championships and beyond. So I will know more by the January training camp.

IG: Has Daria Joura indicated if she will give 2013 a try? If so, what do you think she could contribute to the team?

PL: Dasha is still in and out of the gym, keeping her feet wet. Again, she has not committed either way and I feel she can always contribute to our team when she is fit.

IG: It's also interesting that Olivia Vivian not only spent four years competing in the NCAA (for Oregon State Univ.) but tried for London, and has since won the Level 10 clubs title. What do you think keeps her going?

PL: It is simple. Olivia is one of those gymnasts who absolutely loves the sport, loves performing and has endless energy. She is always a pleasure to have around and her positive spirit is infectious.

IG: Heading into 2013, who are some of the younger girls, and girls coming back from injury such as **Georgia Simpson** and **Nikki Chung**, whom you expect will impact your team?

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PL: Georgia is training well and has added some new skills to her program. Nikki is still recovering from ACL knee reconstruction from May and finishing up her Year 12 studies. The new young gymnasts are looking good and are excited to begin their journey. I am not ready to single any one out yet, but we just finished a camp and lots of good work was being produced.

IG: How much do you think or hope the Australian Youth Olympic Festival (in January 2013) will boost the motivation of your younger gymnasts?

PL: The AYOF has provided many young gymnasts a platform to break into the international scene. This one will be no exception.

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