Claire Donahue/Olympic Preview

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WKU will be well represented in London when Opening Ceremonies get underway tomorrow for the 2012 Olympic Games.

In this week’s View from the Hill, Amy Bingham talks to one of three former WKU student athletes about competing on an international stage.

Former WKU Track and field standouts Gavin Smellie of Canada and Raigo Toompuu of Estonia will represent their respective countries in the Olympics. While standout swimmer Claire Donahue of Lenoir City Tennesee will represent the USA. Before heading oversees, Donahue had a chance to meet with some of her biggest fans here in Bowling Green.

For these swim team members at Indian Hills Country Club, the chance to meet Olympic swimmer Claire Donahue was like a dream come true.

“She’s like the greatest swimmer so I look up to her.”

“She’s really fast and I think she’s really good at swimming.”

But it was just as special for Claire.

“It was really neat to be here to see the huge line. I love that kind of stuff to be able to sign autographs and meet the kids.”

It wasn’t that long ago that Claire was their age, dreaming of one day swimming in the Olympics.

“I was telling them it doesn’t matter where you come from, it doesn’t matter how tall or short you are or how fast or slow. It’s how much you want it and how much your willing to put into it and enjoy it.”

Now Claire’s Olympic dream has turned into reality as she prepares to compete in the 100 meter butterfly this weekend.

“I think I’ll be nervous but I’ve been working with a sports psychologist on campus to control my nerves and it helped 100% at trials.”

WKU swim coach says the Olympics became a goal after Claire’s break-out junior year. Since then she hasn’t let up, training eleven times a week.

“Her work ethic is unbelievable, in the pool and out of the pool taking care of herself…dry land training is brutal.”

It’s that total package that has caught the attention of these young swimmers.

“It’s kind of hard to see myself as a role model I mean cause I’ve looked up to so many people. Haven’t gotten to the point where I see myself that way.”

She’s also still getting used to strangers knowing her name.

“After I swam, I raced, there were a bunch of people standing in line saying Claire, Claire, Claire…that was really fun.”

Donahue’s first heat will be at 4:34 Central time Saturday morning….remember London is six hours ahead. Gavin Smellie will compete August tenth and Toompuu will compete August third. NBC will carry the majority of events on tape delay.

With this week’s View from the Hill, I’m Amy Bingham.

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