

Nine IU Swimmers on Rosters Following ISL Draft

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BLOOMINGTON, Ind. – The International Swimming League (ISL) held its third annual draft to close out the month of June. One former Hoosier was selected in the draft, while eight with Indiana ties were retained by their squad from a season ago.

Each of the ten ISL franchises were allowed to retain up to 15 swimmers from their roster from the previous season. The teams then entered a rookie draft that consisted of one round and a Fan Vote to determine another retained swimmer. The rosters were then filled out with a 14-round draft consisting of 110 total picks.

Indiana is most represented by the DC Trident. Alumni Bailey Andison, Zach Apple and Cody Miller were all retained by the club. Indiana Swim Club (ISC) trainee Zane Grothe joined the group and was also retained. Finally, recent graduate Mohamed Samy was retained via the vote from the fans.

The London Roar chose to retain ISC member and Olympic Games Tokyo 2020 qualifier Annie Lazor. The franchise selected former Hoosier All-American Vini Lanza (30th overall) in the fourth round.

Additionally, the Cali Condors and Toronto Titans each have one Olympic gold medalist with Hoosier ties on their roster. Cali elected to retain world record holder Lilly King, while Toronto saved the rights to Blake Pieroni.

The International Swimming League has released the official schedule for the regular season of racing for its third season. The regular season will take place in Naples, Italy beginning on Aug. 26, and will last for just over a month.

Season 3 will feature the same 10 teams that took part in season 2 of the league: the eight original teams from the first season, along with the Toronto Titans and Tokyo Frog Kings.

Each team will compete in four matches between Aug. 26-Sept. 26. The six highest-ranked teams from the regular season will automatically advance to the playoff phase. The four lowest-ranked teams after Sept. 6 will take part in Match 11 on Sept. 29-30. The top two finishers will advance to the playoffs.

DRAFT RESULTS CALI CONDORS

Lilly King

DC TRIDENT

Bailey Andison

Zach Apple

Zane Grothe

Cody Miller

Mohamed Samy

LONDON ROAR

Vini Lanza

Annie Lazor

TORONTO TITANS

Blake Pieroni

'Ready To Go' -- Confident Lilly King Eyes Olympic Opportunity

By Pete DiPrimio

IUHoosiers.com

BLOOMINGTON, Ind. – Confident?

No doubt.

Cocky?

It depends on perspective.

Lilly King has no time to debate semantics. The former Indiana swimming national title holder has more Olympic races to win, more gold medals to earn and a record-breaking reputation to enhance.

It won't happen without fierce resolve and competitiveness.

Oh, and a strong dose of talent.

If you believe Hoosier coach Ray Looze, who is a Team USA assistant swim coach for the second time, King is poised to do just that when the Tokyo Games start on July 23. She qualified for the 100-meter and 200-meter breaststrokes, plus potentially a couple relays.

Looze says the 24-year-old King is in the best shape of her life, impressive given her accomplishments.

She isn't about to argue.

"That is definitely reassuring," King says via recent Zoom press conference opportunity. "I am ready to go. I feel much more experienced at this point."

Experience comes from a breakthrough 2016 Olympics in Rio. She won gold in the 100-meter breaststroke and the women's 400-meter medley relay with a refreshingly outspoken approach that generated international attention.

"Going into 2016, I was like a deer in the headlights," she says. "I had no idea what was going on. I am feeling a lot more at ease, but also prepared."

Preparation comes despite pandemic conditions. Challenges peaked last spring and summer when facilities closed all over the country.

"It was crazy," King says. "Pools shut down here. We were driving to Indianapolis to swim in a one-lane pool for a couple of months. We were swimming in a pond. I did not like that. Then we found a pool in Martinsville we were training at."

"We got back (to Indiana) on July 4. Training started to resemble normal around the end of August. It was a long summer."

The 200 breaststroke field includes King's training partner Annie Lazor. They will help each other, King says, even as they try to beat each other.

"It is comforting having someone from home next to you," she says. "It's not just in that comfort of her being there, but Annie and I can strategize races together."

"It's fun. I have never been in a major international competition with a teammate in my event. It is very special, and I am going to live in the moment. I am very excited to race."

As for the competitiveness between the two, King says, "I like to think of it that we do want to beat the

crap out of each other, but we don't want anyone else to beat either of us."

To put it in another way, "We want to be 1-2," King says, "we just want to be the 1 and not the 2."

Ask her about the pressure surrounding last month's U.S. Olympic Trials and you get truth, not spin.

"The Trials are great," she says. "You go in to make the team. Most people, you have to be all in at the Trials. For me, that's not necessarily the case.

"My focus has always been the Olympics. It was like, 'Let's get through Trials and get the job done.' The real show will be at the Olympics. That's where my focus is."

In 2016, King didn't make the Olympic 200 breaststroke finals. It burned her then. It burns her now.

"I'm ready to go. I want to prove myself in the 200. Five years ago, I watched the final from the stands. That won't happen this time. I'm excited to have the race I know I can have."

If this excitement comes a year late because of the pandemic, King doesn't care.

"It all worked out fine," she says. "We're all still going to the Olympics, so it's all good."

The "we" consists of eight current or former Hoosiers who qualified for the Olympics. It's 12 when adding IU swimmers competing for their native countries.

Specifically, it's King, Lazor and fellow swimmers Blake Pieroni, Michael Brinegar and Zach Apple, plus divers Andrew Capebianco Jessica Parratto and Mike Hixon.

Hoosiers competing for other nations are Tomer Frankel (Israel), Bailey Andison (Canada), Vini Lanza (Brazil) and Marwan Elkamash (Egypt).

Besides Looze, IU diving coach Drew Johansen is the Olympic diving head coach for the third time.

In the Olympics of 2012 in London and 2016 in Rio, Johansen divers won a combined one gold, three silver and three bronze medals.

"It's just a tremendous honor," Johansen says. "To be a head coach of an Olympic team once, I thought was going to be a once-in-a-lifetime experience. Here it is, the third time. You get named the head

coach based on the performance of your athletes. So, it's (Parratto and Capebianco) and their performances that gave me this honor.

“It's a tremendous gift. The experience I bring to this team is only going to continue to help us have great performances.”

As for Looze, who was a big reason why King won her 2016 gold medals, he says, “I'm humbled and grateful that we have really good coaches here and awesome swimmers. That's what makes it possible.”

Possibility brings responsibility.

“I don't have any satisfaction yet,” Looze says, “because we still have the big one to go. That's Tokyo.

“We're going to be judged by what we do at the Games.”

Adds Johansen: “They are poised to challenge anybody in the world.”

King couldn't agree more.

“I'm looking forward to some fast racing.”