



DEAFLYMPICS UPON US!

Director's Splash, August 29, 2009

On Sunday night September 6 at 10:00 PM eastern standard time in the United States (Taipei, Taiwan is exactly twelve hours ahead of Washington, D.C.), three young American women will be shaking their arms or legs nervously awaiting the start of the first event at the Summer Deaflympic swimming competition. The event will be the preliminary heats of the 400 Freestyle. The swimmers will be Samantha Elam, Rebecca Meyers and Jessica Weeden. Literally months and years have gone into the preparation for this moment.

We don't know yet who will medal and who will not. We don't know how many personal best times the U.S. team will garner. Or how many American records. Or World records. We don't know yet who will surprise the world with a break out performance, or who will turn in that amazing relay leg. But we do know that it will be exciting and that U.S. Deaf Swimming will follow the action day by day, session by session, event by event. Check our website regularly for updates. The swim meet portion of Deaflympics ends Sunday September 13, 2009. One rest day on September 10 divides three days of competition on either side (six days swimming competition total).

Of the ten (five male, five female) outstanding swimmers representing the United States Swim Team at Deaflympics 09, five are representing their country in an international meet for the first time. Only two – four-timer Jake Hammack and two-timer Carlisle Robinson – have swum at Deaflympics before. It is a young team coached by Seda Ozdemir and Bob Laughna.

On the women's side, all three relays should be medal contenders. Carlisle Robinson is a good bet to place high in the butterfly events. Samantha Elam and Rebecca Meyers look to contend in the middle-distance freestyle events. Jessica Weeden is the team's breastroker and swims many other events including I.M. Peggy Liang is a threat in the sprint free and backstroke, as well as the 200 IM.

On the men's side, perhaps the strongest relay will be the 800 Free Relay, though the young men's team could also turn heads in other events. Veteran Jake Hammack is swimming both IMs as well as a variety of strokes. Freestyler Will Landgren is in every free event and will be a crucial relay swimmer. Newcomers Duggan Baker and Brian Bennett have logged some impressive qualifying times in several events, and could make big waves. Breastroker and sprint freestyler Daniel DiDonna should see big time drops in his first international competition.

The team arrived in Taipei earlier this week, adjusting to the faraway land, taking part in various Deaflympic festivities, and getting in the pool water for light workouts. We'll try to post photos and quotes to the website as soon as we can. Thank you to all who have supported these athletes.

Go USA,
Bill Snape