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## **GOLD MEDALLIST LYDIA LASSILA RETURNS AHEAD OF PYEONGCHANG 2018**

**AERIAL SKIING:** Gold medallist Lydia Lassila returns ahead of PyeongChang 2018

Australia will likely field a stronger Freestyle Aerials team at the 2018 PyeongChang Olympic Winter Games after Olympic Gold and Bronze medallist Lydia Lassila joined the Flying Kangaroos Aerials team in Ruka, Finland last week to resume training.

Lydia's return is a huge boost to the team, which includes 2015 World Champion Laura Peel who is returning from ankle surgery and 2016 World Cup Championship Silver medallist Danielle Scott.

With a tilt at a 5th Olympics on the cards, the first question for Lydia, now a mother of two, can only be – why?

"I contemplated coming back in April and May. I was hoping that retirement feeling would come – but it kind of never did. I even thought 'Oh my God, when is this feeling going to come but it was also exciting that I had the drive to keep going,'" Lydia said from Finland last week.

After an Olympic Gold Medal in 2010 and then the first female to nail the quad twisting triple under immense pressure to secure Bronze in Sochi, her personal expectations have changed.

"I'm realistic. The goals have changed. When you've won a gold, where do your goals go? Vancouver was about the gold. Sochi was about the quad triple," Lassila said.

"I can be competitive for another round – opt for more consistency and be more strategic."

"I know I'm on the tail end of my athletic career and with a second son, life is full and busy."

"I'm realistic and have different expectations this time. I'd regret it if I didn't try again."

Lydia's successful feature-length movie *The Will to Fly* is still screening, and in the film is a powerful question her coach asked, "What would your future self say to you?".

The same question applies today.

"The fire is the same," Lydia answered. "It's the same beast."

Australia's OWIA Aerials coaches Jeff Bean and Joe Davies are grinning from ear-to-ear.

"For Lydia's first on-snow session last Thursday we said we just wanted to get her upside-down again with a single back lay out and have some fun. Her eyes lit up like a kid at Christmas," said coach Jeff Bean.

"The development of the OWIA Aerials squad has been strengthened by the VIS (Victorian Institute of Sport) Development Squad coached by Olympian Bree Munro. I always start at the bottom and that's the reason why we are starting stronger to push up to our potential Olympic team."

“We only have four spots for Olympics and now five girls plus Sochi Silver medallist Dave Morris. It’s a strong team dynamic,” Bean said.

The squad comprises Dave Morris in Mens and in Ladies - Lydia Lassila, Danielle Scott, Laura Peel, Samantha Wells, Renee McElduff plus development athlete Britt George.

“Every OWIA squad member has been on a podium. That’s rare,” said coach Joe Davies who formerly worked with the USA team.

The FIS Freestyle Skiing Aerials World Cup season begins on December 17 in Beida Lake, China, then swings to the USA at historic Lake Placid and onto the classic showdown in Deer Valley in early February.

After the North American events, it’s back to Asia on February 10 for what might be the most hotly-anticipated competition of the year - the test event for the PyeongChang 2018 Olympic Winter Games at Korea’s Bokwang Phoenix Park.

[2016/17 FIS Freestyle Skiing aerials World Cup calendar](#)

[2015/16 ladies' aerials World Cup standings](#)

[2015/16 men's aerials World Cup standings](#)

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