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THE EXTRAORDINARY LYDIA LASSILA WINS GOLD IN DEER VALLEY WHERE IT ALL BEGAN FIFTEEN YEARS AGO

The winter sports story of the season has become Lydia Lassila's return to Aerial Skiing for a tilt at a fifth Olympics after her extraordinary World Cup gold medal in Deer Valley, Utah this afternoon.

In only her second event since her bronze medal in Sochi and the birth of her second child, against all of the world's best aerialists including teammate Danielle Scott who is currently ranked as the world number one, Lydia's expectations were only to keep building.

"I was emotional all day and I had a good feeling," was Lydia Lassila's first comment after winning Gold. "I couldn't believe I won."

"To be honest, I was happy to stay on my feet."

The day unfolded with Lydia qualifying fifth and Danielle Scott second and both moving into the Top 12 Final.

As the weather worsened and took its toll on the Aerialists, including Scott who was caught in a sudden cross wind as she took off, Lydia fought through to come out on top going into the Super Final and a shot at the podium.

"I knew it was tough weather and I kinda like that. I was in a good space all day – and sometimes days like this are good for me because it becomes fight or flight," Lassila said.

And fly she did.

With American Kiley McKinnon scoring an impressive 95.17 in the six-athlete super final and Lydia last to jump, it was tense viewing – wondering if the mother-of-two could lift by almost ten points from the first final to create the upset win that no-one really expected.

Performing the same Full Double Full as McKinnon, Lydia executed brilliantly and was awarded accordingly with 95.52 points and a World Cup gold.

"This is the feeling that I missed and came back for," she said. "It's not the winning so much – it's being able to do your best, the pure adrenalin and the fun."

"Hopefully we will get a few more mums out there going after what they want. You can have it all – on some days," the 34-year-old said.

“The team effort with the coaches and athletes, even helping Danielle and I today, is what has made it happen,” Lydia added.

Lydia’s return has lifted the Australian Aerial Team and according to team coach Jeff Bean, it’s good for confidence.

“I’m ecstatic for Lydia. It’s good for her confidence and motivating for everyone,” Coach Bean said.

“It’s been tough weather here, which caught Danielle when she got hit by a head wind. Dave Morris has had a good building block week here getting the quad twist happening. He’s doing all the right things and there’s a lot of room for him leading into the World Championships.”

Team mates World Champion Laura Peel and World Cup medal winner Samantha Wells also found the conditions difficult and did not progress past the qualification round.

Olympic Winter Institute CEO Geoff Lipshut is delighted with the continuing success of the Flying Kangaroos Aerial program.

"It is great to see Lydia back in action today and winning," Mr Lipshut said.

“This was only Lydia's second competition since Sochi - so it is important for her confidence and to have a podium so soon after such a long break. Like everyone in our program we are just thrilled to have Lydia back on the team. She is such an inspiration in so many ways.”

The next stop on the World Cup calendar is the Olympic test event in Bokwang, Korea on February 10.

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