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London Calling: Lamorinda Olympians Headed to the Summer Games

By Marissa Harnett



Photo: US Rowing Anthony Fahden (Lafayette)
Rowing - lightweight men's 4

First-time Olympians
Returning Olympians

The 2012 London Olympics kick off in a little more than a week. Five Lamorinda athletes will have the honor of competing in these Games of the XXX Olympiad. Three are Olympic veterans while the other two are experiencing the dream for the first time.

One first time Olympian, Lafayette native Anthony Fahden, will compete in men's rowing. He and the rest of his four-man team eeked out the qualification in a borrowed boat after a violent storm rendered their brand new boat unusable.

Compared to many other competitive athletes, Fahden got a late start to rowing. Chronic injuries in ice hockey forced him to abandon the sport as an Acalanes sophomore in 2001. Because of his "lanky" build, Fahden decided to try rowing and found the sport suited him. He went on to row for Dartmouth and has been rowing ever since.

At this time, Fahden feels relaxed going into the Olympics. The heavy training allows for little time and energy to think beyond the present. "My fatigue has me thinking more about tomorrow's training than our competition in London," he said.

He admits that will surely change as the Olympics get closer.

Because stress can be overwhelming on race days, Fahden's goal is to keep things simple. "I've learned from a lot of racing that over-thinking diminishes performance, so on race day I take it easy, focus on the present, and have a good time competing," he explained. "In line with this approach, I don't spend much time or energy anticipating my results."

Fahden's Olympic expectations are understated. "For London, I'm just hoping to put together a few, well-executed races."

Athletes from Lamorinda to watch (compiled from available information):



Photo: U.S. Olympic Committee Doris Willette (Lafayette) Fencing - Foil From Lafayette, Willette is a 2011 Penn State graduate where she was an All-American fencer in 2007. She is also a two-time National champion. Although this is her Olympic debut, she has earned five medals in the Pan American games, NCAA Championships, and the Division I USA Fencing National Championships. She was red-shirted for the 2008 Olympics. She will go to London as a replacement athlete.



Photo: USA Swimming Natalie Coughlin (Lafayette) Swimming Previous Olympics - Beijing 2008; Athens 2004 Total medals - 11 (3 gold, 4 silver, 4 bronze) - the most of any female athlete. Coughlin is the first person in Olympic history to win back-to-back gold medals in the 100m Backstroke and is also the first woman to break 59 seconds in that event. She will have a chance to add one more medal to her total in London in the 4x100m freestyle relay.



Photo: USA Water Polo Heather Petri (Orinda) Water polo - attacker Previous Olympics - Beijing 2008; Athens 2004; Sydney 2000 Total medals - 3 (2 silver, 1 bronze) Competing in her fourth Olympic games, Petri is one of the most experienced players on her team. After a disappointing 8-9 loss to the Netherlands in the 2008 Championship game, they hope to bring back the gold from London. Petri graduated from Miramonte in 1996 where she was a founding member of the girls' water polo team.



Photo: USA Water Polo Peter Varellas (Moraga) Water polo - attacker Previous Olympics - Beijing 2008 Total medals - 1 silver - defeated by Hungary in championship game Varellas, a Campolindo alum, graduated from Stanford in 2006. At Stanford, he was awarded the Pac-10 Stanford Male Athlete of the Year. He was a top scorer.

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