



Claire Donahue

...at a glance



Swimming

Career Highlights

- 2012 Olympic Gold Medalist (400 Medley Relay)
- 2011 Pan American Games Champion (100 fly, 400 Medley Relay)
- 2011 NCAA Runner-Up (100 fly)

Vital Statistics

- Born:** Jan. 12, 1989
- Hometown:** Lenois City, TN
- Height:** 5'7"
- Education:** Western Kentucky University '11

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getting to know...

Claire Donahue

Biography

Claire Donahue was a high school All-American, but was far from earning the junior-superstar accolades that most future Olympic gold medalists receive before graduating the 12th grade. Coming out of tiny Lenoir City in Tennessee (population 8,000) she didn't get any attention from the traditional swimming powerhouses that produced the majority of the Olympic team.

Instead, this [2012 Olympian](#) went to Western Kentucky University, which had only one NCAA finalists in its history before Donahue's arrival.

In just four years, though, they had not only another NCAA finalist, but they had an Olympic finalist. For Donahue, Success was 99% about attitude: she couldn't control the circumstance of where she ended up going to school and training, but she could control how she responded to it.

Donahue exploded into the national consciousness during her junior year of college, when she placed 4th at NCAA's in the 100 fly. Then as a senior, she finished 2nd. Still, nobody was certain what would come from it at the international level.

After exhausting her college eligibility, Donahue could have jumped ship and gone to one of the big professional training programs in Florida or California, but she didn't. Just as Western Kentucky coach Bruce Marchionda had faith in her coming out of high school, Claire had faith in her coach after college. She remained there, and that very summer her decision paid off.

She finished 2nd at that year's USA Swimming National Championships, which earned her a spot on the Pan American Games team that traveled to Mexico to take on the best of the entire western hemisphere. She very quickly took another step, and won the Pan Ams gold medal in the 100 fly: her first major international title. She also ended the year as the second-fastest American, behind only World Record holder Dana Vollmer.

The Olympic Trials were a perfect representation of how Donahue's career has gone. She made the finals of the 100 fly, but was on the outside looking in from lane 1. But she had a lane, so she had a chance, and the ever-determined athlete was not to be denied a spot on the Olympic Team. She finished 2nd in that race and was off to the ultimate goal: an individual final in the 100 fly and a gold medal in the 400 medley relay at the 2012 Summer Olympics in London, England with an American flag on her cap.

In London, it didn't matter that she came from a small town in Tennessee. It didn't matter that she went to a non-traditional swimming power. All that mattered were the consistent enthusiasm for training and the undying belief that she belonged among the best swimmers in the world. That's what earned her the right to represent the United States on sport's highest stage, and that's what made her an Olympic Champion.

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