Capacity building has Liam on schedule for Commonwealth Games

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Australian para swimming star and NDIS participant Liam Schluter will be searching for his second Commonwealth Games medal in as many attempts at Birmingham 2022.

Liam, 23, who lives with an intellectual disability and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), has been building his capacity outside of the pool while preparing to perform in it, in hopes of equalling or bettering a 200m freestyle silver medal at Gold Coast 2018.

After a strong lead-up and a solid preparation which included a change to the University of Sunshine Coast (USC) Spartans this year, Liam is fit and raring to go for another shot at the podium.

“The move to USC has been really good for him and he’s been doing a whole swim program for the first time in his career, so, his training has been pinpointed for the Commonwealth Games,” Liam’s mother Michelle said.

“At Gold Coast, he went in as World Champion and was leading the race, but the other swimmer came over the top.

“All we can hope for is that he swims his best and gives it his all, but he’ll be hoping for a medal.

“We’re all very proud.”

Liam Schluter prepares to swim in the Commonwealth Games in Birmingham 2022.

Liam has almost done it all since taking up competitive swimming at the age of 10.

Named the 2019 Sunshine Coast Senior Sports Person of the Year, Liam has been a dual Paralympics’ finalist, World Championships’ bronze medallist, and Virtus Games gold medallist.

Outside of swimming, Liam has been building his independence over the last 6 months, while transitioning to move out of the family home.

Assisting the process for Liam has been his NDIS supports, which may prove to be his secret weapon not only in Birmingham, but in life in general.

Previously relying heavily on Michelle and his father Trevor, access to NDIS-funded support workers has helped Liam adjust to having day-to-day responsibility.

“Support workers come in and make sure Liam has his washing done, support him with preparing healthy food, and provide him with reminders on grooming and keeping the house and his room tidy,” Michelle said.

“They also help him with paying bills and learning the value of money.”

A key in Liam’s growth has also been his building capacity for social interaction and maintaining friendships through support from his social workers.

“They’re trying to teach Liam barriers and filters, and he’s learning how to keep friendships and how to interact better with people,” Michelle said.

“They’re with him a couple of days a week and take him bike riding, or for a walk with the dog… they’re helping to make him more responsible.

“Liam’s behaviour can be very challenging, so there’s also a young male doing a lot of work around his behaviour management.

“I was involved in Liam’s care for a long time, and with my health, it takes a toll. So, if we didn’t have the NDIS, I don’t know what we’d do… it’s been such a blessing.”

As for blessings, Michelle said while the family won’t be front and centre in Birmingham, they’ll be watching on eagerly from home.

“We’ll get together and send a photo of us all to him for support, and we’ll decorate a side of the house to watch him from on the day,” she said.

“He once said to us, ‘why do I not think like you and Dad’? and I said, ‘don’t worry, you can achieve in sport rather than academically,’ and that’s what he did.

“The Commonwealth Games is a pinnacle of the pool, and for Liam to represent his country since he was 16… we’re just so very proud.

“Sometimes when we talk about just how proud we are, I get a tear as it means so much to us all.”

Liam’s 200m S14 freestyle gets underway from 4am (local time) on Thursday, August 4.

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