

# U.S. Olympic Team Trials - Swimming

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Lucas Oil Stadium

## Simone Manuel Gretchen Walsh Torri Huske

Media Conference

**Q. Simone, what made you so emotional after that race?**

SIMONE MANUEL: I think anybody who really knows my journey knows how hard it was, knows how hard it was to get back into the pool, to be cleared to get back into the pool. Going to practice and getting my butt kicked every day, missing intervals, having to modify things until I finally got strong enough to even complete a whole week of work. I basically started from ground zero.

To make arguably, in my opinion, the best Olympic team ever in swimming with what I went through and really only, I guess, 18 months of good work is something that I can be proud of.

It definitely wasn't the result I wanted, but when I really think about how far I've come and the mountain that I had to climb, it's really important for me to look back and be proud of myself for continuing to fight through this process and believe in myself.

**Q. Gretchen, going back to the last trials for this, how much did this event mean to you and to perform and punch your ticket on this event?**

GRETCHEN WALSH: Yeah, it means a lot. I've definitely battled with this event for a lot of years. It's been quite a journey just to get back to even the times I was going when I was 16.

So just to get third in such a competitive event like this one is pretty much a dream come true. I think my 16-year-old self would be really proud of me. It wasn't exactly the time I was looking for, but I don't want to dwell on that. I think just getting to the wall, putting up a good race, and being on a relay with these ladies is definitely even more than I could have asked for.



# U.S. OLYMPIC TEAM TRIALS



**Q. Simone, was there ever a time where you thought you were through? If so, what brought you back?**

SIMONE MANUEL: I don't think there ever was a time that I necessarily thought I was through. I think that I had to do a bit of soul searching after Tokyo to decide what I wanted the journey to look like.

I definitely think that through the process there were times where I was like why am I doing this? I can think back to certain meets and results that I had at those competitions, and you travel home on Sunday, and I'm like, I really don't want to go to practice Monday. Like I'm not ready to go back just because I wasn't seeing the progress I wanted.

So I think there was a lot of ebbs and flows in the journey, but I don't think in my mind there ever was an option to quit. I don't know, getting through trials in 2021 was a tough journey, so I felt like, in some way, I had some armor to be able to get through this one. It wasn't what I thought it would be, but like I said, I'm really proud of the process and the journey it took to get here.

**Q. Gretchen, could you describe what this week has been like for you. You set a record. You punch your ticket in one event. And now you're going into at least another with another race still to go.**

GRETCHEN WALSH: Yeah, it's been really, really exciting. When I do think about the last time, last trials, it's like, wow, I've come such a long way. I couldn't be prouder of myself and just happier with like where I'm at in the sport.

I'm really enjoying it. I love what I do. This meet has just been a blast with everyone. I'm definitely looking forward to doing the 50 free.

I was telling Torri, I was like, I only have 150 left of racing, so I'm looking forward to the sprint splash and dash. But all the swimming thus far has been pretty insane. I'm just really happy with everything.

**Q. Simone, how specifically did moving to train with Bob Bowman help you with your swimming resurgence?**

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SIMONE MANUEL: I think it was a lot of things. I think for me, first and foremost, was just on the emotional and mental level. I think he knows what it takes to bring an athlete from a tough spot back up to the top. I mean, he did it with Michael. He did it with Schmitt.

I feel as though he's helped a lot with myself, and I think he really understood what overtraining was and the effect that it had on my body and really had a comprehensive plan on how the progression of my training would look like.

I think overall I wanted a coach that -- there's nothing in it for Bob. It's just simply his care for me. He's accomplished as much as he could in probably -- I don't know. I'm not describing this well, but he's accomplished a lot in this sport as a coach. I think just having that support and that mentorship and him just telling me that he wanted me to focus on having fun in this process I think was something that was really important for me.

So I think it really started obviously on the mental/emotional side, but I think physically, some of the things we talked about, I think he just knew what to do to hopefully get me back up to the top.

**Q. Simone, thinking back on 2021, what was your Tokyo experience like? Were you able to enjoy it at all?**

SIMONE MANUEL: No.

**Q. Does that at all frame what you're feeling tonight and what you're able to now look forward to over the next two months?**

SIMONE MANUEL: Yeah, I think so. I'm going to be honest. I haven't thought too much farther ahead than getting some rest, finally getting some sleep. I think the pressure's off a little bit. And just trying to do my best for the 50 free.

I think Paris is going to be a blast. It's a different spot than I'm used to right now with only being a relay swimmer, but it's my third Olympic team. That's something that's really hard to accomplish. I hope that I can be a leader to these women and men on the team to just be their very best, to fight for Team USA, to fight for themselves.

It's a different role, but it's something that I'm really excited about. I think I'm going to have a lot of fun. So it's not something I thought too much ahead on, but I think that it's going to be a blast.

**Q. For Gretchen and Torri, does seeing what this**

**means to Simone kind of put things in perspective about making this team and also give any extra motivation for competing in this relay.**

TORRI HUSKE: Yeah, I mean, you see the emotions at this meet, and that makes it so much more real, like seeing you crying, seeing how much it meant to you, it's a really big deal. And making your third team is like an amazing accomplishment.

I didn't realize like -- I feel like you don't realize how hard it is to truly make Team USA until you're competing for that spot, and to make it three times is just an insane accomplishment.

I think that, yeah, definitely seeing the emotions from everyone makes the moment more real. Like I, after my 100 fly the other day, I felt totally fine afterwards until I saw one of my teammates crying, and I was like, oh, my God, this is a really big moment. It definitely makes it feel more real.

GRETCHEN WALSH: I would agree with Torri. Hearing Simone's story, it's very moving. I think she's a great example to just put into perspective what you can go through in this sport. It's very unforgiving.

She's a true inspiration to everyone on Team USA. I'm excited to have her as a role model out in Paris, and I'm just looking forward to experiencing my first Olympics with her third Olympics, and it should be one for the books for sure.

**Q. Simone, during prelims today you came out with your armor on, game face and everything. Tonight when you came in when you were announced, it seemed like you were receptive to the crowd. You did have a smile on your face. Record breaking attendance tonight. What did it mean to swim here in front of this crowd tonight?**

SIMONE MANUEL: This sport realistically speaking has been a very lonely place for me. I think after Tokyo I felt even more alone. I didn't feel as though I got the support that I would have hoped for or the grace in talking about my journey that I had hoped for.

But being in this arena and being surrounded by these fans honestly has been so healing. I remember the 200 free, I think maybe it was the 200 free semifinals, getting out and hearing the crowd cheer even louder. Just to know that these people are just excited to see me swim again, swim at this level again is something that's really special, and I don't take it for granted.

It's something that I think I'm appreciating even more, that I'm not as lonely as I thought I was. There's people that really care and are excited to see me swim and be an inspiration.

For the longest, it's not something I've been able to necessarily understand or recognize, but I think that being here and hearing how the crowd has been cheering for me has been really special.

**Q. Simone, you said that Bob wanted to show you that swimming was fun again. You look happier. Are you enjoying swimming again?**

SIMONE MANUEL: I am. I still have my ebbs and flows. I still have high and lofty goals, so seeing the result after the 100 free today, I was a little bummed, but also at the same time, I'm so happy. Like I have worked so hard, and I have been surrounded by some of the best people that I know that have continued to push me and make swimming fun again.

I mean, that's just part of the journey that I'll never forget. The times, the medals. People say they all fade, but the memories are things that will last forever. I'm just so proud of myself, my character, what I've learned through this process. And more than anything, having fun in the sport again.

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