

U.S. Olympic Team Trials - Swimming

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Emma Weber Emma Weyant Katharine Berkoff Media Conference

Q. You guys have all this very different journeys from the last Olympic cycle till now. Can you talk about what got you to this point and some of the struggles that you guys have made your way past to this moment?

EMMA WEYANT: I think ever since Tokyo I've had a bit of an up and down. The past two years, have definitely been some low points for me, especially after last year with the DQ.

But I think going into this year, especially, I worked so well with my coaches at Florida, Annie Lazor and Kristin, on that breaststroke kick that I had a lot of confidence going into this Olympic Trials.

I was really nervous but I was really confident in the training that I put to work this year.

EMMA WEBER: I think being at UVA last year and my first year, building on strength I gained that first year helped a lot. And I've been working a lot with Jake and Todd on my strength and like my mental ability and just being like very present when I'm racing and it's definitely paid off.

KATHARINE BERKOFF: For me, three years ago, missing the team, when I, like, wholeheartedly believed I could make it was really horrible. Like it was so devastating.

But looking back, definitely was the best thing that could have happened for my career in the long run. I mean, I've had some ups and downs in between with, like getting really sick like a year and a half ago.

But I think all of that just led to more motivation into this summer and kind of taught me what it takes to make the team.



U.S. OLYMPIC TEAM TRIALS



Q. I wonder if you can talk a little bit about the work that you've done on the mental skill side. What's it taken to build your confidence going into these kinds of race, especially against the fields that you face in backstroke, and what's kind of been that process for you?

KATHARINE BERKOFF: Well, I've been working with Coach Kris -- and I know you work with her, too. She's been super helpful. My therapist from home, I talk to her a lot about similar things, and just trying to remember that I swim because I love it and I've had these Olympic dreams since I was born.

And so just trying to do it because I want to, not because anyone else wants me to, and just staying true to myself along the way.

Q. Your father obviously was an Olympian, and fairly successful one, in his own right. Was there any conversations with him leading into these Olympic Trials, and what does it mean for you now to be part of the same backstroke legacy of excellence that he was part of?

KATHARINE BERKOFF: We talked a lot. He never would put any pressure off and on me for making the team.

He was my earlier inspiration. As soon as I found out he made the Olympics and got a Gold Medal and world record, I decided I wanted to do the same thing.

So we don't talk about it too much now but we plan on getting the rings tattooed together this summer because my dad hasn't gotten them yet. It's really cool to carry on the backstroke legacy that my dad had.

Q. Earlier this week Regan said you swimming so fast in the semifinal is what helped push her to get to the point where she got the world record. Does that inspire you or push her to maybe want to snatch that world record from her?

KATHARINE BERKOFF: Totally. It's so cool to hear that I pushed her to get that because I mean, it's always -- I've always been chasing that top spot. But like she's been such an inspiration along the way. So for her to say that

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means a lot.

But yeah, I mean, seeing her go that fast is huge motivation. It's so cool to watch.

Q. You went to the same high school at Missy Franklin; correct? Do you have some memories of her being around growing up? Is that someone that you would have looked up to? And what's the response been from back home now that they know what it's like having an Olympian, now having a second one?

EMMA WEBER: Yeah, definitely, growing up in Colorado, Missy was the biggest inspiration for all of us. We would all go to the Regis Jesuit swim meets and crowd into the little pool and watch her swim, and when I was assigned to go to high school, I wanted to go Regis in part of Missy, and in part because of the academic success that school has. Being there and being a part of what Missy has created in Colorado swimming and at Regis means a lot, and being able to carry it on and see her here means the world.

Q. Going into the final, you're obviously up against two Olympic Champions in that heat. When you're looking at a psych sheet like that, what's going through your mind, and you know, how do you find covered in that moment when you are up against people that have so much more comparative experience at the international level?

EMMA WEBER: I've been working on a lot this year. Being confident in my race plan and how I train, and just being very present in the moment. Because I found when I'm present, it calms me down.

So really just looking around and taking in the fans and the people I'm around, and just acknowledging like all the success that's around me when I was in the ready room, when I was getting up to the block, calmed me because I'm like, it's really cool that I've gotten here and I get to be with these girls.

So kind of just feeding off their energy and everyone else's energy.

Q. Going back to the tattoos, when did you and your dad make that plan and when do you plan to get them?

KATHARINE BERKOFF: I don't remember when he first talked about it. Probably before last Olympic Trials. I don't know why my dad never got the tattoos. I'm not sure if it really wasn't a thing back then.

I'm so glad he waited because I think we're even getting it

in the same spot. That's pretty cool. But yeah, I need to make that appointment pretty soon.

Q. Before Paris?

KATHARINE BERKOFF: Oh, no, no. But I'm scheduling it ahead of time.

Q. What's the spot you're going to get it?

KATHARINE BERKOFF: I like the forearm. I think that's cool.

Q. It sounds like you and Katharine share a mental strength coach or something along the line. Can you share what you get out of working with that person as well?

EMMA WEBER: Yeah, Katharine can attest to this, but Kristin's awesome, and she's really kind of made me view swimming in a different way and a really positive way.

I just get a lot of confidence and like we work on strategies and skills to ease our mind before races to look at practices differently. Kind of just take the best out of the work we are doing and stay positive and content with everything and yeah, it's definitely helped a lot.

Q. This is your second Olympic Games but you're in a very different situation to when you qualified for Tokyo. You were just out of high school and training with your club team and now you've been through college and transferred schools. How does your mindset and your perspective differ headed into Paris compared to Tokyo?

EMMA WEYANT: Yeah, I group swimming in Sarasota, and I was really fortunate to have a great club career and a great club coach in Brent Arckey.

But since I made the move to Florida, I've kind of had to go back to square one with training and back to the basics to find out what made me about in 2021 and get back on the right path, and I really owe that to the training group at Florida.

And having Bella there this year has made a height difference for me and the rest of the women's team. But having people like Katie, Karen, and Bobby training every day; it's one of the best training groups in the world, so it's always motivating.

Q. Can you talk a little about just the mindsets going into the last Trials and going into this Trials, and just the difference in what the moment was like when you

made the team?

EMMA WEYANT: Everyone says this, but I didn't truly feel it till the day before how much more pressure there is the second time around. I talked to Basel's (ph) head coach, Chuck, and he told me before making second on the big team, that's the most nervous he's ever seen her, and I feel like I replicated those nerves a little bit.

But just getting through that that was a huge relief and back in 2021, it's kind of like you're coming into the meet as a newbie and you don't really know what to expect. Having gone through it once, coming again, is kind of just thinking about making a difference from what I did in 2021.
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