

U.S. Olympic Team Trials - Swimming

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Lucas Oil Stadium

Rowdy Gaines Elizabeth Beisel

Media Conference

Q. Rowdy, great to see you. For both of you, another Olympics, another doping controversy. Generation after generation of swimmers, you and I go back to '84, have dealt with this, whether East Germans, Chinese in Barcelona in '92, Michelle Smith in '96 in Atlanta, on and on it goes. Could you just describe your thoughts about this, what it means for these athletes and what it means for your sport?

ROWDY GAINES: I think both of us can certainly feel their pain of what they are going through. As you said, it takes me back 40, 45 years. And I'll never forget Shirley Babashoff saying, "They cheated," the East Germans and she was called Surly Shirley and everybody was making fun of her and didn't believe her.

Now that's a heavy-duty accusation, right. And I'm not prepared to say that because I just don't know, you know. I'm disappointed, I think in the process, and I can certainly feel for the athletes because I think we both want -- I think the only thing that can hurt our sport is the anti-doping effort. You know, I want there to be a clean Olympics.

There are cheaters all around the world. There's no doubt in my mind. But the thing is, I think it's in isolated cases where you have these individuals you're talking about. We do know what happened in Russia, right, and that became systemic.

So when it becomes systemic, that's a whole different issue. But I just don't have enough information to be able to say that. You know, you only have to watch the movie, Icarus, though, to understand it can happen.

ELIZABETH BEISEL: To echo everything Rowdy said, the foundation to fair sport is having faith in your anti-doping agencies.

ROWDY GAINES: Right.



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ELIZABETH BEISEL: And that has been shaken over the past few months, decades; it's always been shaken.

So we both lived it. You kind of have to feel for the athletes right now, especially heading into the Games, with them maybe questioning faith in the system that is supposed to protect them. So it is disappointing.

ROWDY GAINES: I also believe -- don't you think, I really want you guys to get this across. I really do believe that the vast majority of athletes around the world are clean. I don't think this is a situation where it's just rampant across the world.

ELIZABETH BEISEL: I mean, think about what we have to do. We provide (indicating sample) where we are, 24 hours a day.

ROWDY GAINES: Right.

ELIZABETH BEISEL: Like we have to submit that every single day, regardless of whether you're swimming.

ROWDY GAINES: 24/7.

ELIZABETH BEISEL: And I do agree. I think the majority of sport is clean but --

ROWDY GAINES: Maybe that's just a hopeful feeling. That's what I feel in my gut, anyway.

Q. How would you assess Lilly King's chances in both breaststrokes here, and at the Paris Olympics, if she makes it there?

ROWDY GAINES: I think Elizabeth will tell you how much we love Lilly. She was her teammate.

I have said this on the broadcast a million times. She is really one of my favorite swimmers to watch. You know, she's brash. She's open. But she always backs it up, you know, one way or the other, she always backs it up. Has she lost races? Sure.

But she's one that -- it's very rare to see a Lilly King nowadays, in my sport; the only one I know. We see athletes that are very open in what they are saying and

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what they are talking about but not many, you know, and Lilly, we need Lilly King. We really do. Right?

ELIZABETH BEISEL: Yeah.

ROWDY GAINES: I think every country needs a Lilly King. I love her. I can't wait to watch her again. It's not going to be easy. But with the exception of one athlete out of these 1,007, nothing is going to be easy for any of them. The only one, and maybe I should not say this in front of Anthony, but I think Katie is the only one that really has that kind of clear path to Paris.

Other than that, I don't know, Lilly, it's not going to be easy.

ELIZABETH BEISEL: I echo everything he said. Lilly is the best. To speak on her as a teammate, because I was lucky enough to be on a few teams and an Olympic team with her, she's that hype girl that you want. She's always good energy, good vibes. She's so confident and that just exudes throughout the entire team.

ROWDY GAINES: But it's not cockiness, though

ELIZABETH BEISEL: Ever.

ROWDY GAINES: There's a big difference in cockiness and confidence, and I've never seen that cocky attitude out of her. That's a big difference, in my opinion, anyway. Some people might see it as cockiness, I don't.

ELIZABETH BEISEL: She's just real. And I know all of you appreciate that, too.

Q. Can you talk about your growing role with NBC over the last few years and what that's been like for you? And Rowdy, can you comment on what it's been like to watch Elizabeth in this role?

ELIZABETH BEISEL: So nice. It's been an honor, honestly. It was tough for me to leave the sport because I still -- and I'm sure you do, too, like coming to these meets, a part of you misses being an athlete. But then you wake up and you're like -- but then you wake up and you're like, actually, on the plane ride I was thinking, if I were an athlete, what would I be feeling? I was like, I'll really glad I'm not because it's so stressful.

It's been such an honor to be mentored by Rowdy and not just Rowdy, but everyone on the production team, whether they are in the truck or talent or on the air. It's awesome because I get to work in the sport that I love most, and hopefully give these credits -- or give these athletes the credit that they are due, and do it again alongside one of the best of the best.

So I'm going to do post-race interviews for the first few nights, sprinkle in a little commentary, but mostly just enjoy watching these athletes and (watching) their dreams come true.

ROWDY GAINES: It's certainly mutual admiration. I love Elizabeth like a daughter.

ELIZABETH BEISEL: Sister, come on.

ROWDY GAINES: Oh, my gosh, I have a granddaughter about your age almost.

Anyway, no, she -- I told Summer Sanders this back in 1996. She was destined for much more than swimming, you know, and Elizabeth is in that same category. I told you this awhile back that she's destined for much bigger things, and her broadcasting career, if she wants that. It's an honor. She knows so much about the sport because she's so current, which really helps me a lot.

So she's talking about mentoring -- or me mentoring her. She's the one that mentors me as much as Michael does when Michael is going to be in the booth with me. I love being with them, and I can't wait to get it started.

This is, you know, No. 9, I think. No. 9, I think, yeah.

ELIZABETH BEISEL: Nine broadcasting.

ROWDY GAINES: This is my ninth Olympics.

ELIZABETH BEISEL: Awesome.

ROWDY GAINES: And ninth Trials, too. Actually, 11 straight Trials.

ELIZABETH BEISEL: Because athlete, yeah.

NIKKI WARNER: I think you're tied for Trials with Ms. Brennan over here.

ROWDY GAINES: Oh, hi, Christine.

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