

# U.S. Olympic Team Trials - Swimming

Saturday, June 15, 2024

Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

Lucas Oil Stadium

## Katie Ledecky

Media Conference



# U.S. OLYMPIC TEAM TRIALS



**Q. For some, releasing a book before the Trials would be a distraction, but for you it wasn't. Would you say that?**

KATIE LEDECKY: No, I knew that date was coming, so I was totally prepared for that and really just excited to put that out there and have people start reading it and to get here.

It was really exciting to travel here a couple of days ago and get in the meet mode and start the racing today.

**Q. You're a four-time Olympian. There have only been nine U.S. swimmers to do that, you're the sixth female. What does that mean to be a part of that club, to have had this kind of longevity and dominance?**

KATIE LEDECKY: Yeah, it's special. I remember three years ago just trying to process being a three-time Olympian, and now being a four, I just tried to enjoy each moment tonight. It was pretty exciting this morning just to feel the atmosphere, kind of get those first race jitters out of the way. It was pretty loud for prelims.

So tonight I felt a lot more comfortable walking out on that pool deck and felt like I could enjoy the crowd that was out there and enjoy the atmosphere and just try to soak in every moment of the process, the process of getting into the Olympics, which is the trials.

**Q. Can you talk about the challenge of getting yourself mentally back to where you're willing to do this much work and focus this much again? It must be harder every time to get the excitement going, to get yourself back into this state of mind.**

KATIE LEDECKY: I actually don't think it is. I think it's kind of the opposite for me. I feel like I enjoy this more and more each year.

Again, I think, as I said out there, I think it's a testament to the people that I have around me, the people that I've had

around me my whole career in Bethesda, Maryland, and out at Stanford, now in Florida, just really great communities that keep me excited about the sport, great teammates that push me every day, great coaches that believe in me and push me to continue to reach for bigger and bigger goals.

That's why I've been able to be consistent, and I pride myself on that consistency. I challenge myself to stay consistent. Yeah, I mean sometimes it can be tough not having -- feeling like you're not having a breakthrough. But to be really consistent is something I'm really happy with. I've learned to just really enjoy each day of training and take in every moment and just appreciate the fact that I've been able to have this long of a career, stay injury free, stay pretty healthy, be able to do this this many years.

**Q. You kind of answered the question there, but your ability to not take anything for granted and to enjoy the process, that seems like it's been there all along. Can you kind of just describe the mentality that you've kind of had for so long?**

KATIE LEDECKY: Yeah, really ever since I've made it to London -- I talk about this in the book, I never thought I'd make it there. I never dreamed of that as a young kid to make an Olympics.

So kind of after London, it was kind of two things. It was, one, I wanted to get back to that level, prove that I wasn't just a one-hit wonder, but at the same time, I reminded myself that anything more than that is just like icing on the cake, cherry on top, whatever because, again, I just never thought I'd make it to that one Olympics.

So that's the perspective that I think I've be able to maintain and that keeps me focused and keeps me enjoying the sport so much, enjoying the teammates and the people that are around me.

**Q. I know you've got a lot of work still to do here and another month before Paris, but have you allowed yourself to look at all ahead to that 400 in Paris? It's going to be a helluva race in Tokyo and obviously a great field that you'll be going against. Kind of the improvement that maybe you're looking at in your head, where do I need to go to get back to that gold**

**ASAP** sports . . . when all is said, we're done.®

**medal?**

KATIE LEDECKY: It's going to be a great field, I've known that. I've done a good job here, and continuing forward this week, I want to continue to focus on what I'm doing here and making sure I'm trying to be my best self.

Then I think I've always done a pretty solid job of the period between trials and the games of being faster at the games.

So my goal is no different this time around, and hopefully that will put me in a good position in the 400.

**Q. I'm just curious about the athlete experience. Obviously this is a big move up to an NFL stadium. What the experience was like for you and what you expect an event of this size, the impact that it will have on the sport.**

KATIE LEDECKY: Yeah, it was incredible. I think tonight blew it out of the water. Couldn't ask for a better start with Gretchen's world record, and then a young kid from Indiana qualifying for the Olympic team, being the first one to be an Olympian.

It was a pretty cool start to the week, and as I said, this morning was pretty loud for prelims. We got up on the blocks for my heat, and I thought that the noise had died down, and it got louder again. I started shaking, and I went down for take your mark. Relax, Katie, relax, relax, don't false start, don't false start. It was kind of this energy that I hadn't felt at this kind of a meet, even an international meet, before.

Again, just getting that first swim out of the way, I felt a lot more comfortable tonight. Again, just kind of was blown away walking out there and seeing all the fans. Yeah, I hope it moves our sport forward. I hope there are some young swimmers out there that get excited about today and will be at a trials four years from now in L.A. or at the Olympics in L.A. and beyond that as well.

Yeah, this is only good for our sport.

**Q. You were talking about just kind of looking back, like your first Olympics, it's very possible this is going to be a young team where there could be first time or maybe someone who's going to do more events than maybe the first time they did an Olympics. As a veteran or someone who's been through this, how do you describe it or what do you impart when people ask for advice?**

KATIE LEDECKY: Yeah, I just try to be honest and open whenever they ask questions. I love our training camps, especially the Olympic one is a little bit longer, so you

really get to know each other. I think the younger swimmers always get more and more comfortable as the days go on and start feeling more and more comfortable asking questions.

I hope that everyone that makes the team feels comfortable asking me questions about my experiences, and I'll do my best to impart what I've learned and just be behind them. That's the biggest thing, just reminding them that they belong. That was the big thing for me when I was 15. My coach at the time, Yuri, always made a great effort of reminding me at each level -- Junior Nationals, Nationals, Trials -- reminding me, you belong, you qualified, that you belong on this team.

That's the message I would have. Usually, the best questions are the ones just about how the meet flows. Often it's about training, and just I think we all like to pick each other's brains and learn from each other in training during those training camps. So I'm excited for that. We've got quite a few days ahead of us now.

**Q. A few questions ago, when you were asked about the 400 free in Paris, you talked about making sure you focused on yourself. Do you feel like you've gotten better about that over the years. What are some strategies to make sure you do that? I guess a follow up, do you even know what Ariarne's time was earlier this week?**

KATIE LEDECKY: When I say focus on myself, we're at these trials here, and I'm focused on my competition here, and I'm just always striving for self improvement. So staying focused on my goals and the goals that excite me and really pushing towards those.

I'm a student of the sport. I keep track of everything that's going on around the world. I know where everyone is going, and I'm excited to race everyone. Ariarne is incredible, what she did last week, and what Summer's done and Erika Fairweather, and Paige is going to be great. It will be a really fast field, and I'm looking forward to it.

**Q. Congratulations. 2021, you were slower than you were today, or I would say you were much faster today, both prelims and finals, than you were back in the trials in 2021. What kind of impact does that have on your mindset and your confidence both moving into the rest of the week and forward to Paris.**

KATIE LEDECKY: I think one of you guys probably can fact check me on this, but I think I may have been faster than I was in 2016 as well. Yes? Okay. So I'm pretty happy with that.



Historically, the 400 hasn't been a great race for me at trials. 2016, I was 3:58, which was good, but I was out really fast, and I kind of felt it on the end. Then 2021 I was a little slower than I had been in season. So today really that was the best I felt in a 400 free at a trials meet as long as I can remember.

Yeah, that's what I'm happiest about, the time is just a bonus as well.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports

