

U.S. Olympic Team Trials - Swimming

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Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

Lucas Oil Stadium

Aaron Shackell

Media Conference

Q. Aaron, congratulations. Katie Ledecky talked about seeing Gretchen Walsh in world record tonight, and she talked about the young kid from Indiana who made his first Olympic teams. What's your origin story? What motivated you to get here tonight and do this performance?

AARON SHACKELL: I think there's a lot of different things, even from when I was young, I've just always been around swimming. I'm from a swimming family. My dad was an Olympian for Great Britain, and I think also being in a bunch of different sports as a kid was really important for me.

Just not getting burnt out on swimming. Swimming is a tough sport, and it's a rigorous schedule, and you can't really sell yourself out when you're young. I enjoyed playing a bunch of different sports. Then eventually when I got older, I think just seeing all of my teammates, Jake make the Olympics in 2021, as well as Drew, that really motivated me to eventually make my moment like I did today. So, yeah.

Q. Looked like there were a lot of emotions when you were going up on the elevator up to the floor there. What was going through your mind?

AARON SHACKELL: I think it's just a moment I've always dreamed of. Watching previous Olympic Trials or really any sport, getting a medal in front of a massive crowd is something I've always dreamed of. Then raising my hands and everyone cheering, that's a moment that every kid dreams about.

Really I was just soaking it all in, to be honest.

Q. Before 2020, Carmel High School had no Olympians, and now for the second consecutive Olympics, you'll be representing the Greyhounds in a way with Team USA. What does it mean for you to have that legacy because they've been so dominant in the state of Indiana?



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AARON SHACKELL: The legacy of Carmel High School and Carmel swim club is unmatched. The way we've passed down -- I don't know how to say it. We've inspired each other and passed down the legacy from swimmer to swimmer. I hope I'm doing that now to the next generation, whether that's my brother or the kids below him.

I have no doubt it's going to continue. As long as Chris is there, it's going to continue, I can tell you that.

Q. On your 400, it looked like you were racing like you wanted that spot on Team USA. What was going through your mind that last 50?

AARON SHACKELL: To be honest, the last 50, everything in my body kind of turned off, like I couldn't really hear anything. I don't know, I think I was kind of so in the zone, and I saw that I had the lead, and I know the training that I do, if I have the lead with 50 yards left or 50 meters left, I'm not going to lose. Like I'm not going to let myself lose.

Q. After your race, we had the chance to talk to your sister, and she said that she was more stressed out for your race than she was for her own. What is it like being able to go through this journey with her and to be able to see her right after making that team?

AARON SHACKELL: First of all, I think Alex was the first one to give me confidence that I could be an Olympic swimmer, a decent swimmer at all. She was always better than me when we were younger, and that kind of gave me the confidence that my family does have good swimming genes and that I could be good myself.

Then seeing her, she was the first one to hug me after I came down the stairs, I feel like she was more excited that I made the team than with her own swim. Like I saw her after her swim this morning, I mean, she was excited, but when she saw me, she just told me I was an Olympian, and it was probably one of the best moments of my life.

Q. This year's been a bit of a whirlwind for you. You started off the school year at Cal, went back home to Carmel, entered the transfer portal, headed off to Texas next fall. Can you talk about what this last season of training has been for you and what coming



back to Carmel, what were the factors that really brought you to the finish line?

AARON SHACKELL: First of all, I want to say Cal is a great program and a great school. I have nothing against them. What they do is great, and they've proven that on multiple stages.

But I think the thing that came down to me, especially this year, I've always wanted to be an Olympian, and if I wasn't swimming well, I just didn't want to risk wasting an opportunity. And I know I was swimming great and my improvement rate was unbelievable prior to leaving for Cal.

So I knew I trusted Chris, and I knew if I came back, I would improve in some way, and if I didn't make it, that's okay, I know I did everything I could. So that was really just what went through my head.

Q. You mentioned Chris just now when you were talking to the fans. I'm sure you saw all the Carmel fans in the stand. Also you got to swim with Jake too. What exactly does the support from the Carmel community mean to you?

AARON SHACKELL: The Carmel community is everything to me. That's part of the reason why I swam so well. I think I thrive whenever I'm inspiring other people or when I'm around kids that are looking up to people. I think that's what made me want to be good.

There's like a certain amount of like -- I don't want to say power, but it energizes you to make you want to go faster. I don't know how to describe it, but it just fills me.

Q. Have you had a chance to talk to your parents, and what did they say to you?

AARON SHACKELL: I haven't had a chance yet, which is kind of disappointing. I wish I had. I was looking for them in the crowd, when I was coming up -- when I was celebrating, and when I was coming up on the podium.

I saw some Carmel kids. I couldn't find my parents. That's what I'm looking forward to right now is just saying hi to them and celebrating.

Q. Trials is always a big stage. What did you think of the whole pool setup and 20,000 people at a swim meet?

AARON SHACKELL: I think a lot of people get nervous when they look at 20,000 people or a big stadium because swimmers maybe aren't used to it. I think for me it makes me swim faster. For me, I've always dreamed of performing in front of like a basketball arena or football

stadium, at least when I was a kid. In swimming you don't always have that opportunity.

So to get an opportunity to put on a show in front of 20,000 fans, it's everything to me.

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