

U.S. Olympic Team Trials - Swimming

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Paige Madden Media Conference

Q. What does it mean for you after the past three years and ups and downs to be back on the Olympic Team, not just in an individual team but also be on a relay?

PAIGE MADDEN: For me, relays for team U.S. are everything. I would much rather be on a relay than swim an individual race. I think they are so fun and it's just what Team USA is all about.

I think for my own personal journey the last three years, just making it back on this team is just -- I'm just doing it for myself, proving it to myself that I can overcome adversity and want to inspire other people that if you've set your mind to something, you can do it. And I've had a lot of health challenges and mental health struggles, and I'm just really proud that I've been able to work through that and have had a great support system.

Q. Back on the relay that you were on three years ago, you guys swam what could have been a world record time. You got a Silver Medal and there's some discussion about whether that should have been a Gold. What level of motivation will you bring to the second go-around here?

PAIGE MADDEN: I think we definitely have a point to prove. I'm confident that myself and my teammates are all clean athletes. I think all I can submit said it perfectly. We wanted to get tested after our performance in Tokyo and getting drug tested is a privilege.

So I think there's not much we can do about the situation. I'll let everyone handle how, you know, the situation. Yeah, I think.

I think we kind of want to just focus on ourselves and show what we have had and do our best.

Q. Just wondered about your game plan going into both of the freestyle races you've swam. What was your approach this time and was it different from races



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-- past rounds that you've competed in these events to give you confidence to swim the way you did?

PAIGE MADDEN: Tonight, compared to the 400, I kind of knew that I had made the team, so tonight I really had nothing to lose.

So I wanted to go out in a 56, which I did, and I think I went on a 56 low. So I sort of paid for that at the end. But I'm proud of myself for putting myself out there. I know that I gave 100 percent, so that's all you can really ask for.

Maybe I should have been a little more conservative, but at the end of the day, I gave it my best.

Q. You mentioned some of the struggles you've had over the past few years. Were there points that you didn't think you would get back to this level? What was your mindset at the end of last summer's nationals and what helped you get that confidence back?

PAIGE MADDEN: Yeah, there's several points where I thought I was done with the sport. I think two years ago after 2022 Trials I was at an all time low.

At one point I had COVID and I was in isolation and I had the flu, a flare up, and I really couldn't swim at the level that I wanted to. And I love to train, and it was heartbreaking for me to not be able to train the way that I like to train. I didn't think that I was ever going to be able to even finish a 400 free or a 200 free. I couldn't even finish a practice.

But I leaned on my coaches, my family, and yeah, especially my coach, Blaire Bachman from UVA, and just my parents and everything.

Yeah, sorry what was the second question?

Yeah, I think more than anything, just finding that love for training again, and not putting that pressure, not setting those expectations. Like being okay with being slower in training and then working up to where I am now, which is now I'm faster than I was before.

I just had to be really patient and lean on my coaches and my teammates and I think more than anything, just putting

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more focus on the day to day, taking it one day at a time rather than looking at I have Olympic Trials a year from now. It's like, okay, I'll have this practice tomorrow or this practice this afternoon. I think focusing more on the present really helped.

Q. What did you learn from the veterans on the Olympic Team your first time that you can impart to some of these first-timers?

PAIGE MADDEN: Yeah, that's a really good question. Let me think about that I learned a lot. Just learning to have fun with it. I think you had a similar moment at Worlds last year, before my relay in Tokyo. I had given Katie McLaughlin a poker chip, and I think you did something very similar.

But any ways, just sort of like leaning on that camaraderie and learning to have a laugh and smile in the ready room when you're about to have the biggest moment of your life is just what Team USA is all about and something that I'm really proud of.

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