

U.S. Olympic Team Trials - Swimming

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Erin Gemmell

Media Conference

Q. We noticed kind of a special greeting that Katie gave you tonight. We recognize that you are the daughter of an Olympic swim coach and brother of an Olympian. Your brother, Andrew, trained with Katie for the 2012 Olympic Games, and you were an age group swimmer and got a chance to see every part of that growing up. How much of an influence did Katie Ledecky have on your career and can you tell us anything about that?

ERIN GEMMELL: Yeah, such a big influence. I don't think I would really be here if it weren't for her. I think it's really special to be able to be that close to someone who is so inspirational, getting to see, like you said, the day-to-day work that they put in. It makes it seem more achievable in a way being so close. It makes them seem a lot more human. It's just really showed me that if I put my mind to decompress it, I could eventually reach that point.

Q. What are your earliest memories of Katie?

ERIN GEMMELL: I think I was brought to a Gold one, which is the group she was in, holiday party before my family officially moved to Maryland. I was only seven or eight, and I definitely was terrified of her. I just know that I was welcomed immediately as the coach's cute little kid and everyone wanted me around, which I can't believe they did.

I was definitely an annoying child. But I think she was just so welcoming to a little seven-year-old fan, and when I think about it, and she was only a sophomore in high school at the time. I think if someone had acted like that towards me when I was a sophomore in high school, I would have been really weirded out. But she was kind and welcoming with all of it.

Q. With the family pedigree and experience in the Olympics, was there pressure for you as you were getting towards this level?

ERIN GEMMELL: No, I don't think so. I think if anything, it



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just made the rest of my family support me more. I never sensed, like, Oh, we need another Olympian in the family. I think it was just great to have all that support and all of that kind of backing me up in a sense, knowing that people before me have done it, and I can do it, too.

Q. Because of the family lore, are there aspects of the Olympic experience that you've heard about from family members or just from others, other athletes, things that you're particularly looking forward to about the Games' experience?

ERIN GEMMELL: Ever since I was really little, I've always looked forward to the box which used to show up for my brother and my dad whenever they made a big time. It's all the gear that you get. That's definitely something that inner child is excited for.

I'm also just excited to make all these new and maintain all the connections that I already have. I've seen all the friends that my dad and brother and Katie have picked up in their experiences, and I'm excited to deepen those bonds, too.

Q. Obviously a lot has been made of your relationship with Katie, which is fantastic, and not a lot of people have something like that. She practically jumped at you when you guys touched the wall. What did that moment mean to you, and just soaking everything in that happened both when you looked up at the scoreboard, but then also when you were introduced to the crowd later, what did those moments mean to you?

ERIN GEMMELL: They mean everything to me. It's something I've been working towards basically since I can remember, and to get to share it with somebody that has seen me working towards that and has supported me all the way and have her out there with me in the moment, made it so special.

Q. I wonder if the experience from Fukuoka, how much that plays into maybe how much more comfortable you're going to be this summer, and if things like being on an Olympic relay with someone like Katie Ledecky becomes normal after practice or what's that like?



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ERIN GEMMELL: I think any experience is helpful, especially at big meets like this.

I've said to my dad a couple times over the course of this meet and the years that I really enjoy swimming next to Katie in an individual two free. I'm comfortable there. I know what she's going to do and I know what I'm going to do. Being on a relay with her, it just makes it feel a lot less daunting.

Q. You obviously made a transition in training this year going to the University of Texas, and I know short course, not necessarily your thing. What was that like as far as the training adjustment. Were you ever worried that you should wait a year because it is an Olympic year, and why do you think it did work for you?

ERIN GEMMELL: Yeah, of course, that was a big decision for me in the fall.

But I think it really worked because my teammates and my coaches at Texas just really helped me love the sport. I think it's really hard when you get to a level like this to remember that it's supposed to be fun, and having that short course season with Carol and Mitch and Chad and all of my teammates really made it fun, and that made me able to come in here with I think a much more positive attitude than I would have had if I had stayed at home.

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