

# U.S. Olympic Team Trials - Swimming

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Lucas Oil Stadium

## Regan Smith

Media Conference

**Q. Congratulations. Two-parter. First of all, seeing world record, obviously you got very emotional with that. Just can you take us through what that moment was like for you, and then also the second part, how much did how fast Katharine has been going this meet helped push you to that mark?**

REGAN SMITH: Yeah, I think there's a lot of factors that went into tonight's time. There were many years that went by after 2019 where I thought that I would never do that ever again. So that was a long time coming and it took a lot of practicing, improving by confidence with Bob and with Coach Eric, and a lot of my teammates, too.

So I knew that I had it in me but for a long time, I didn't, so I'm really, really happy that I finally started to believe in myself. And like after seeing Gretchen break the world record in the 100 fly on night one, I was so inspired by that. Doing that alongside next to her was great. So I really wanted to do something special myself. And like you said, seeing Katharine break 58, that is so freaking hard to do, and yeah, she's one of five women to ever do it; and that was awesome, getting to race next to her and the two of us going two of the fastest times ever in that event.

So I just think overall, it was like an A+ plus race for so many girls in that field but I'm so psyched.

**Q. What was your reaction --**

REGAN SMITH: Just like, f---, yeah! You know, like long time coming. You know, like it's about time. So I was psyched.

And the feeling of getting it tonight versus getting it five years ago was like so different. I can't really like pinpoint exactly what was different about each race five years and then tonight but yeah, I was just psyched out of my mind. It was great.

**Q. You kind of answered my question with the "f---, yeah" there. I was there in 2019 when you broke the**



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**record and it kind of seemed like everything was easy for you at that point, but now it obviously has not been as easy. So how rewarding is it to sit here now?**

REGAN SMITH: Yeah, it's incredibly rewarding. When you're 17, when you're a teenager and I had not really done much to my name yet, and you're right, it was very easy. I had no pressure on me. I was always the youngest. Nobody really expected much out of me, and so it was so easy to walk into races feeling so fearless and not really caring what the outcome was. And I really just shocked myself at that meet in 2019 because I didn't believe I was capable of it.

Now tonight, I'm in a much different place in my life. I'm a lot older, obviously. The pressure is a lot different. The expectations are a lot different for myself and for like other people around me.

So it's a very different experience but I think I've, like, learned a lot over these five years, and I've had a lot of lows, in backstroke, in particular. But I think it's taught me a lot and it's helped me definitely strengthen things on the mental side. Because I think I've always had it physically. I just for a long time didn't have it mentally.

But I've worked really, really hard with Bob and a lot of my teammates and I've learned a lot from all of them, and I think that's what really culminated in a great swim tonight.

**Q. We don't get to see you in practice. We just see the times you post in meets, and based on how you've been performing this spring, you've been knocking on the door of a best time in this event for a lot of meets, and finally, I think this is, what, three best times in a row for you in this event. Was there a point when you maybe knew that not even just the world record, but a best time was possible, and when you started to really, really believe in yourself, kind of like you were saying?**

REGAN SMITH: Yeah, absolutely. I've been, like you said, sitting at like 56:07, 57:07, so consistently in season for two, two and a half years now. And so I knew that I had a best time in me because that's like tenths of a second we are talking about. It's like, I don't know, having longer fingernails or something, you know what I mean. So I always knew that I had it in me but it was just putting

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together that perfect race.

I think maybe it was a slight mental block because I was always right there, like right knocking on the door like you said, but then once I did it did it, finally like, what was it, a month ago now? That kind of like opened the floodgates for me to do something great. At least that's the way I look at it.

So once I was able to do it once, I think it made it easier to continue to do it, which is great.

**Q. Can you just describe to us what it's like to swim the backstroke in a football stadium? Like was there an adjustment? It's kind of wild, just again not someone who is out there, but thinking about you breaking a world record in this sitting that was so unique?**

REGAN SMITH: It was really exciting for a lot reasons. The crowd was incredible. So that was super fun.

And the interesting thing about swimming under a JumboTron is when you're on your back, you can like see yourself because there's screens and you can see the race going on. And so I actively tried to avoid it, because in semifinals last night, I could see the world record line as I was approaching the finish. And I didn't want to think about that like during the race, like watching myself like chasing the world record line.

So I think that's the only thing. It's like not letting yourself get extracted by the JumboTron, but other than that, it's like swimming in any other pool honestly. I know some people were worried the ceiling is too high; are they going to have hard time staying straight. And I could tell, I think I kind of hugged the lane line coming home. Like I didn't have a perfectly straight race. But that's all right.

Overall it was a pretty typical feeling race, which was good.

**Q. Like you said, you've been building confidence here. Is confidence the main thing that you think changed between your most recent swims, and specifically the American record yesterday or anything else happen differently technically or biomechanically during the race?**

REGAN SMITH: I think it's confidence all the way. I think I've always had it physically. I think I've always had like a God-given natural ability to swim backstroke but I just never believed in myself ever, and that's always going to be a work-in-progress, I think.

But after 2019, and then heading into 2021 Trials, I was at

like my absolutely lowest point confidence-wise. I just didn't want to be there. I wasn't excited. I had no faith in myself. I wanted other people to do it because I thought that they were going to be better off doing it than I was.

And that's so sad to think about now because like I just said, I always had it, but I just didn't have it up here. And so I really, really owe it to Bob and to Eric and my teammates at ASU, and now at Texas, just because they have taught me so much.

I think what I really struggle with is separating emotion from logic, and I think the best of the best, they are able to stay logical in the hardest times, and that's what I always struggled with. Because when logic goes out the door and emotion comes in, that's when you choke, and I did that over and over because I just let my emotions take over. And I think I'm really starting to do a good job at staying logical and knowing what I'm capable of and knowing what I do in practice, and knowing what my abilities are, and I think that's what's really taken me this far.

**Q. Was there a turning point? It sounds like it's still a work-in-progress to make sure that confidence was there. Is there anything that you can point to or any moment or something happened that you said: I can do this; I can get back to a world record?**

REGAN SMITH: That's a good question. I started working consistently with my sports psychologist Emily Klueh back in, like, October. And she was so good at drilling into me, like looking at the facts. Like, remaining logical. And saying, okay, here is what's true about you and who you are as a swimmer, as an athlete, as a person, and here is what's not true.

Like here is what's letting your -- here is your emotions and here is what's not true about what you're telling yourself.

So once she drilled that into me over and over and over; and then Bob, as well, giving me insane sets in building my confidence physically, and then being around a lot of male teammates who are just so good at being dogs every day in practice and not caring. I think that all just kind of came together.

And like you mentioned and as I mentioned, it's still a work-in-progress, right. So I'm not sure if there's an "Ah-Ha" moment, but I think just every meet that I've been to, I've been consistently feeling more confident in myself and more sure of myself, and I have less self-doubt in my head and I'm able to just look at things through a very logical and steady lens. And before, I was always like, oh, my gosh, can I do this; I don't really want to do this. I was really letting the fear move in. And I think -- I'd say, yeah,

like since October, it's been a very steady climb upwards.

**Q. You talked earlier about the floodgates opening and going personal best, personal best. Do you think you can go faster in Paris?**

REGAN SMITH: I hope so. I'd love to. I think 56 is a possibility, for sure. Whether it's me or one of my competitors, who knows. But yeah I'm not going to sell myself short, absolutely not. That was an amazing race but it wasn't a perfect race. I know there's things that I can clean up and do better, and I'm going to work towards that.

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