

U.S. Olympic Team Trials - Swimming

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Dave Durden Ryan Murphy Media Conference



U.S. OLYMPIC TEAM TRIALS



THE MODERATOR: We'll take questions, please.

Q. Ryan, how did the year-long delay impact your training approach, your mental approach, just your overall build-up to the games?

RYAN MURPHY: Yeah, so I think the build-up to the games was interesting in the fact that there actually was a build-up in terms of what we were allowed to do at Cal. I think as the initial shutdown came down, we weren't able to swim at Cal. We had to find some other options. We had to find some other weight rooms/dry land options. We eventually were able to get back into Cal with a small group. That group ended up kind of growing throughout the year until now where the whole team is able to swim together. So that, that was pretty, that's a pretty good symbol of the year, is we kind of got back to close to normal by the end here. And in terms of like my physical/mental approach, it's been great. I think this year has been about as good of a year of training as I've ever had and I'm really, really excited to see how it all comes together out here.

Q. Dave, a general question, but is there anything to be learned as the head men's coach when one of your prospective Olympians stepped away from the trials feeling like the pursuit of an Olympic medal was too much? Not just taking part, but it was gold medal or nothing, basically.

DAVE DURDEN: Can you ask that question again? Sorry, I just want to make sure I heard you correctly.

Q. Is there something to be learned in a broader perspective, as a coach, as a coaching staff, as an organization, when you have one of your 2016 Olympians step away, not because he doesn't enjoy competing or swimming anymore, but just the pursuit of Olympic medals or nothing has become burdensome.

DAVE DURDEN: Yeah, I mean, I, there's absolutely something to be learned from that. I think we're learning and have learned a lot in the past -- well, I don't want to speak for others. I'll speak for me. I've learned a lot in the past year. I've learned a lot in the past four years, going from Rio to getting ready for Tokyo to getting ready for now 2021, getting ready for 2020 and now for 2021. My perspective is one as a college coach, which I understand the balance of intercollegiate athletics and academic pursuits, which also includes professional pursuits that go beyond the sport of swimming. Sometimes those professional goals do not involve swimming. Some of those professional life goals, as our guys get a little bit older, a little bit more wise, a little more understanding that they, that the sport that they have loved as a kid or even as adult, their priorities have changed, and we appreciate that. We celebrate that. We want to make sure that we get them going in the right direction in life. So I have learned that. I continue to learn that. And I know that over the next four years, I'll, or even three years, I'll continue to learn more about it.

Q. Ryan, wondering if over the past 15 months if you had any moments, any doubts of this whole event now even happening.

RYAN MURPHY: Yeah, of course. I mean, I think that the main thing we have learned in the past year is that it's hard to plan very far in advance. I think that's something that I've always liked to do. I've always enjoyed doing that and that's not something we have been able to do. And I think that's a really valuable skill from this year is learning how to live day by day and being able to adjust day by day depending upon what our situation holds of the.

Q. Ryan, you guys have had just a great backstroke training group there. How much have you relished being part of that and having that daily competition?

And then, Dave, from your standpoint, what's it like watching him respond to that competition?

RYAN MURPHY: I love it. I love it. I think Dave has a great knack for just getting really quality people in at Cal, and so it really is a joy to show up to the pool every day and swim against those really awesome people and those

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very talented athletes. And they're all very unique in their own right. Going back to when I first started at Cal, Jacob Pebley was an incredible training partner, and then he moved on as his wife got into med school and in San Diego, and now we have got Daniel Carr, Bryce Mefford, Destin Lasco. It's just a really incredible group to be a part of. Each has their individual strengths, that if we're doing an underwater set, I'm going to want to line up next to Destin Lasco. He's got incredible underwaters. If we're going a little longer backstroke, probably line up next to Bryce Mefford. Daniel Carr can beat me nine times out of 10 if we're just jump starting to 15. So everyone's got their individual skills and it's just really fun to keep each other on our toes every single day.

DAVE DURDEN: I think with this group specifically, I mean, I don't want to sound cliché, but it is a really fun group to work with, just because of the personalities that we have in the group. And that brings a dynamic to what we're doing where it just is, I thoroughly enjoy coming down to the pool deck and working with these backstrokers. Destin Lasco is probably the nicest guy you're ever going to meet. I mean, truth be told. He was up there in COVID testing for about three and a half hours today, and he came out and was smiling, and he was like, It was great. It was a wonderful experience. So like that's the type of kid that he is and that's a little bit of a manifestation of that group. I mean, it's, they really enjoy spending time with each other. They really enjoy competing against each other. And I think when you have a dynamic like that, it doesn't always happen that way, so when you have a dynamic like that, as a coach, I try not to overanalyze it and just enjoy it for what it is and really help those guys accomplish the goals and swim fast.

Q. As the men's coach for Tokyo, what are you looking for this week from the performers, especially as it relates to knowing the selection process you'll need to do for the relays and how tough international competition is, especially in the medley relay that the U.S. hasn't lost ever at the Olympics.

DAVE DURDEN: Sure. First, when you say Coach Durden, I look for my wife because she's coaching Moraga Country Club and that's like, they're going to have their World Championships at the end of this summer and that's a really big deal. So when you say Coach Durden, I start looking for Cathy behind me.

But really what I'm looking for in this week is trying to stay in the day-to-day. It's really tough in wearing two hats, being the head men's coach and also being the head coach of our athletes that are looking at this meet. So I'm really trying not to let myself get too far ahead and thinking about relay selection, medley relay, etcetera. And I have

to be careful with that. Even as we get to the first night of this meet and we have and we have men that make the U.S. Olympic team, as much as I am fired up for them and looking forward to Tokyo, I've got to keep those guys that make the Olympic team with their head in the next seven days of this thing, right? And because there are guys that are going to be racing on day one and day four and day six and so just kind of keeping them moving in the right direction through this.

So I am a minute to minute, hour to hour, not really trying to get too, too far ahead. I was late for this thing, right? So I'm trying to just to keep it going in a minute to minute fashion with this group. And as we get through it, then we'll start thinking about relays and start thinking about our competition and start thinking about how we can meld this group together ahead of Tokyo.

Q. Obviously with California going into lockdown your training was probably a little bit more disrupted than most last spring, but then that continued into the summer, fall, winter with lack of meets and whatnot. How hard was it to balance some of the pros that you have training who were not getting the same amount of racing opportunities when you have a college group that is getting a lot more reps at that and how do you measure how people are doing when there are maybe just a few less data points than a normal Olympic year run up?

DAVE DURDEN: Yeah, it was hard. That's kind of the short answer to that. And I appreciate you calling me Dave instead of Coach Durden. That's awesome. (Laughing).

No, I, but, yeah, it was a challenge, one of the fortunate things for a lot of our professional athletes is they did have some racing opportunities in Europe to get to. So I was over there for 10 days, just seeing the setup of that as this that went from October through November, which was great.

Then as we got into January we did start to have some of our Pro Series meets and in January and March and in April and that helped us out to really see kind of where our athletes were at little kind of points in times.

The tough thing to do as a coach is you want this to be as normal as possible and everything we have done this past year really hasn't been normal. And that's okay. I mean, it's, I think as a coach you can get lulled into sleep and say, Well this is what we have always done. And I hate doing that because sometimes it can get a little boring.

So I like the challenge of kind of being without a locker room for a year, you know, and having our guys change

outside and be, you know, just be thoughtful about swimming in a 50-meter pool and starting from other ends and what we had to do through that piece.

It's not normal, or let me say, it is normal for us to have some training interruptions in California. We have had some unfortunate events, whether it be wild fires or whatnot that has kept us out of the pool for different reasons. And so we have been adaptable through things and our guys understand that and they get that, they're a pretty resilient bunch in that regard.

Q. Question for Ryan. How do you keep your swims, good, bad or indifferent from defining you as a person?

RYAN MURPHY: I mean, that's a great question. And I think the hardest thing is that I really, I really do care. I really care about the outcome of every single swim and I think that's mostly as a result of just realizing how much work I've put into it, but also knowing how much work Dave's put into it, Chase, Roman, my support system, my brother sitting in the back over there. So it's like there's so many people that impact a performance and so you want to honor them every time you step up to the box.

But I think at the end of the day like I have so many things that I'm excited about outside of the pool, whether that be my career after swimming or whatever, whatever it is after swimming, I'm really excited for that. So I think as a result of having, I guess, a well rounded bunch of interests, I think that helps me from really being defined by the sport.

Q. Ryan, given the absence of competitions, fans, crowd and all that, do you think this one will mean a little bit more in Omaha, given the absence and lull of swimming?

RYAN MURPHY: Oh, yeah. I mean, it will be fun to have some fans in the crowd. I absolutely love that part of the sport. It really does add a level of adrenaline behind the blocks and it makes us feel like we're doing something really cool when people are cheering, when they're invested. So I cannot wait to have some fans in the crowd and hopefully they're going to be cheering really loud.

Q. Dave, what do you think is the biggest difference the year delay has made? Do you think it will impact the older veterans swimmers more or the younger swimmers more, what should we, what do you think is the likely trend that the year delay made?

DAVE DURDEN: Yeah, I don't know if necessarily a trend, because I think it affects everybody. It's, for some of the younger swimmers, it's given them a year to get a little bit

better. And when I say "younger swimmers", on the men's side I'm looking at kind of our National Junior Team group from 2019, having an extra year, so ultimately two more years to kind of get themselves in a spot to really impact this team, which is good.

In terms of our veteran swimmers, I think of our veteran most swimmer on our side in Nathan, this extra year has helped him. Just further removed from cancer, further removed from battling that, further into his life as a husband, as a father, which gives you proper perspective on things. I mean, all those things are really, really good things.

So I see it, I see it affecting every -- again I'm a glass half full sort of guy -- so I see it affecting everybody in a positive way as we have moved through -- and I say that from the perspective of my group -- like I've seen it affect everybody in a positive way with the guys that have been training in Berkeley over this past year and a half now.

Q. Just because you have coached Tony, can you wrap your head around the fact that's competing here at 40, what do you make of that and how is he able to do that after everything he's been through and that he's put his body through?

DAVE DURDEN: Yeah, Anthony is awesome. I mean, I love that guy. He has taught me about human potential and he's done so in a lot more eloquently than I just put it. He has -- every now and then I get a text from Anthony and it's always good to have conversation with Anthony.

So I'm excited to see him race. I mean, I hope the smile on my face says that. I mean, I'm really excited to see him get up and compete against this group.

THE MODERATOR: All right, thank you everyone.

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