

U.S. Olympic Team Trials - Swimming

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CHI Health Center

Ray Looze Lilly King Media Conference



U.S. OLYMPIC TEAM TRIALS



Project Believe with USADA. They were testing out virtual testing, so that was, that accounted for I think around six tests. But, yeah, most of them were just random normal drug tests.

Q. Just to follow up, do you believe there will be cheaters competing at the Olympics in Tokyo?

LILLY KING: As always, unfortunately.

Q. That's a yes?

LILLY KING: Yes.

Q. As the questioning you're getting has demonstrated, you're pretty much seen as the face of clean sport and I'm wondering if your views on doping are complicated or calibrated at all by the fact that you could have a U.S. Olympic teammate in the 200 breast who served a doping suspension for a tainted supplement.

LILLY KING: I mean, my stances are clear. I don't think people should be cheating, whether -- I don't know what the repercussions for doping bans should be. I think that's up to the organizations. But I don't want to race people who are cheating who have served bans, so it's as clear as day.

Q. What has your evolution in the 200 breast been like? Do you have, do you have a more appreciation for it than you did in 2016? I think we look at you as equally as good at both distances, but in 2016 you did not make the final.

LILLY KING: Yes, that's correct. I mean, obviously it's been five years. I was, again, a child in Rio. But I just didn't have a ton of experience at that point and I'm feeling much more confident and definitely have been focusing a lot more on the 200. I'm not saying my focus has shifted from the 100, but feeling a lot more prepared and a lot more confident going in this time around.

Q. I'm wondering what your feelings are and where you think swimmers' heads are as we get ready for this after such a long delay. Do you expect world record times? Do you expect things to be a little slower?

THE MODERATOR: We'll get started with questions.

Q. How are you feeling about the state of doping in the world, especially after all the disruptions we have seen from the pandemic in the last year?

LILLY KING: Definitely concerning, as always, but especially with COVID. I would definitely say some of the countries that have not been as trusted are probably taking advantage of the time that they had without testing. Personally, I know I have been tested over 20 times in the past year, so I know the Americans are being well taken care of, and myself especially. But I think, unfortunately, the Americans can control what they can control, but the rest of the world, I'm not so sure.

Q. I'm wondering what in the last five years from when America first got to know you, what you've learned and how you've grown since then.

LILLY KING: Oh, gosh, the last time I was up here I was a child (laughing). So, yeah, it's been quite the journey and something, I was kind of overwhelmed yesterday when I walked in to the pool, just like walking through the warmup area walking in to the competition pool and just thinking like this is where it all started and just five years ago -- I feel like I've been here forever. But, yeah, it's been a really, really cool journey and kind of going from being the rookie to the veteran, one of the veterans on the team has been a cool transition for me, I think.

Q. You mentioned a moment ago that you have been tested 20 times. You said over 20 times. Were those all, knock on the door, random tests? Could you kind of describe that, especially how that worked during COVID?

LILLY KING: Not all of the tests were just random, knock on the door, several of them were. I would say probably around May or June last year I was part of a project called

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What do you expect the athletes to do here in Omaha?

RAY LOOZE: First, I think the kids are dying to race. Like, I hear this on the deck, We can't wait for this meet to start. If it started tomorrow they would be even happier. I think we're probably going to see a little bit of a slower meet, but there's pockets of people that were able to continue to train through ingenuity by swimming in ponds and, you know, private homes and stuff like that, safely, but, you know, we went through that and the feeling was somebody's training or other countries just don't have the kind of protocols we do, so we better be prepared for when the Olympics do happen. But there's, I think it's going to be a little slower and if anybody sets a world record, that's a phenomenal accomplishment. But I think there's going to be some world records that go down because there's been some people that have had to go through a great deal and they really, really want it bad.

Q. What issue do you think that kind of drives, Lilly and every athlete has kind of different ways they approach things and hers is to have to not shy away from tough issues, and what is it about her that she's able to kind of thrive on that and speak her mind and still succeed in the pool?

RAY LOOZE: Well, Lilly dreams about racing a lot. That's the number one thing she likes to do. And the greater the stakes, the more the pressure, the happier she is. So if she gets to race somebody that's a threat, she gets super excited and that's when you'll see the best come out of Lilly.

But she's also one of the most durable people I've ever seen, never misses workout, trains super hard, and then the people that she's been around a lot, from her parents to her coaches have never stifled her voice. Even when it wasn't the best voice or maybe the best opinion out there, I think we just let her be herself. Katie Meili, she was telling me a story about her, and she said, Do you know, I have a greater appreciation for Katie Meili now because Katie let me be myself, and that says a lot about the people that have been around Lilly.

Q. The last time I saw, you were swimming in a pond, and can you just describe your year and then how excited you are to get in the pool here and race?

LILLY KING: Yeah. Well, first of all, I'm very sorry you had to see me during the pond days. (Laughing) definitely not -- maybe not our best idea. Definitely one of our more creative ideas. But, yeah, it's, you know, this year, like everybody, we have had our ups and downs, but I think we, our group at IU has been one of the few groups that's been training the whole time. We only took a week off after

we found out the Olympics were postponed. But really once we got back into our pool, everything was kind of back to normal. Once we had a month or two, got back like back into really good shape, we got back into racing, and it's been fairly normal, I would say. Obviously not exactly the same, like, we have to wear masks at meets, but I think we're really lucky to be doing what we're doing and it came a lot quicker than I thought it would.

Q. Lilly, I'm curious, are you fully vaccinated and what do you think about all the concerns about contact tracing and the security and the extra effort everyone's going to have to make in Tokyo to stay safe?

LILLY KING: Yeah, I am fully vaccinated. Got it as soon as I could. Just, you know, another thing I don't have to worry about. And I didn't want to be selfish and potentially infect my teammates, my family, my coaches. But, yeah, I do appreciate the extra efforts they're going through in Tokyo. I think I heard somewhere they were trying, they were going to offer vaccines to all the athletes, which I think is fantastic. So hopefully we can get everyone as vaccinated as possible by the time we get to the Olympics.

Q. You said a couple times, like you come from a long line of outspoken women. I'm wondering if there are any memories of you maybe from school growing up where you spoke your mind and like got in trouble or what were you kind of speaking up about as young Lilly?

LILLY KING: I wouldn't necessarily say growing up I was like taking a stance at school. But I was always just very myself and I think my mom's always said like you can't contain my personality, like it just is what it is. But I was always just very myself and just really genuinely didn't care what other people thought of me. This was actually kind of funny, very middle school Lilly, but like I remember all the girls were getting like all on-brand clothes and shoes, right? And I would like, I would purposely get the off-brand and my mom was like, Oh, thank God.

But, yeah, just like, dumb little things like that. Like, yeah, I was, I'm going to be myself. I don't really care. Whatever you guys think, it's fine.

Q. A bigger picture question, Lilly. With you being one of the people, Michael Phelps being gone, was such a dominant figure in the sport for some years, I think this is the first trials he hasn't been at since like 1996 or something. As one of the swimmers that's going to be sort of expected to fill that void in a way, I mean probably nobody can do what he did by themselves, but, I mean, obviously there's a lot of talent here. What do you feel about like stepping into



that role, and what do you think about the general U.S. team -- it still seems like obviously there's a lot of great medal contenders and it's not going to be a shortage of the Star-Spangled Banner being played in Tokyo by any stretch?

LILLY KING: Yeah, obviously, losing Michael was huge for this team, but we haven't had him since 2016, so we still had four years to grow without him. But, yeah, it's great like being one of the leaders finally, I feel like. That's kind of always a role I wanted to be. In Rio I had a lot of opportunities to learn from those veterans from Michael, from Misty, from Katie, all those people and now I kind of get to flip those roles and be that person for somebody else.

And as far as medal contention, we're looking pretty good, I think. So, personally, I think the women, if we have the meet we can have, can win every single individual gold. I think that would be -- that would be pretty cool, right? But really, just looking at it, I think that is a genuine possibility.

And, yeah, I think, I mean, we always do great, so I don't know, I don't know why we would think it wasn't going to be great just because Michael's not here.

Q. How did you tailor your training to make up for the lack of racing opportunities last year?

RAY LOOZE: I think we got fortunate, a lot of these guys got to go to a meet in March and then we got shut down and then they got to pick up meets again in September with the ISL. The ISL was something they really looked forward to and it was a huge positive, ton of racing, that sort of filled that void, the gap.

They were getting ready to burst the seams come August and we were doing our best with lactate and stuff like that, but you know, they were real patient and there was, you can't replicate the kind of racing that people like Lilly need, they have got to see the live action.

So the ISL really helped us out and then USA Swimming was kind of getting up to speed right out of the end of that and it's been plenty of racing since then.

THE MODERATOR: All right, thank you everyone.

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