

U.S. Olympic Team Trials - Swimming

Sunday, June 13, 2021

Omaha, Nebraska, USA

CHI Health Center

Chase Kalisz

400 Individual Medley

Kieran Smith

400 Freestyle

Media Conference

Q. Chase, did you know Michael was going to come out of the stands and greet you? What was that moment like between the two of you old friends?

CHASE KALISZ: I knew Michael was coming. He texted me this afternoon good luck. I had a feeling that he was going to be in some VIP area, so I thought the chances were high that I would see him after the race.

Q. What was that like?

CHASE KALISZ: It's great. Michael has worked with me since I'm 13 on strategy for that race and outside of Jay Litherland, he is the other person I would call my main training partner in my entire career. It's awesome to see him at Trials and awesome to see how well he's doing right now.

Q. For Chase and Jack, talk about your shoulder injury. When did you feel like you were back to yourself again? Maybe Jack can answer that. Was this ever in doubt that you would make it tonight?

JACK BAUERLE: He can answer that better than I.

CHASE KALISZ: We are over a year from it now. Like I said before, this was really the first time I've ever brought it up because this is a sport and things happen. But I think what was it, SECs was the first time that I was -- that we started training for right after 2018, early 2019.

And like I mentioned before, I think more so than the pain that I was in, in my shoulder and the clicking that I was taking every single stroke, it was a mental thing for me, that it was hard for me to overcome because I never dealt with injuries.



U.S. OLYMPIC TEAM TRIALS



I mean, all the credit in the world to this guy for sticking with me through the ups and the downs and everything that comes along with coaching me. We had a pretty good year this year and I'm really happy with how everything has worked out.

JACK BAUERLE: It's difficult, because you can't do the things that you would like to do sometimes so you have to do things that are a little bit more unusual. But to Chase's credit, he sort of worked through it and when you get a little bit older, you will get some bumps and bruises that you didn't have before. We have to adjust a little bit. It's not uncommon. Tough guys figure out a way to be tough when it counts.

Q. Chase and Jack, I want you to comment on this, too, but the moment after you and Jay realized that you made it, you embraced, and had this wonderful moment, and you both turned to Carson and put your arms on his shoulder. I don't know what you said to him, but it was really an impactful moment for people. A lot of people know somebody that just missed the team and has been in a lead in a race and has had that happen. Can you explain what went into that moment and for Jack what did it mean to see your guys do that?

CHASE KALISZ: Well, before that, I mean, I was talking to Jay. Just like 2016, I look up and I see Jay touch, and I forget the entire race. That's one of my best buddies; that's my training partner. It means the world to go 1-2 with him. As far as Carson, Carson has nothing to worry about. He's one of the most talented kids that I've come across. He's clearly got three strokes that are better than me. I think he just needs to as he gets older really kind of re-strategize how his race goes. I was really lucky to have Michael in my upbringing kind of go over those things, and the 400 IM is the ultimate race where that counts more than really who is better at what stroke.

I think he's right there. I think he has a bright future. I would probably say that was probably my last 400 IM at Trials. I never want to count myself out but I don't see myself doing it at 30. So I think Carson has a bright future and he's doing a lot of things right.

JACK BAUERLE: To answer your question, I was proud of

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these guys. After I watched what happened and saw the 1-2, I was elated, but like any coach you watch your athletes and how they act immediately after, and I was proud that they went over to Carson and did what they do. It was a pretty neat moment. These are powerful times and there is just a lot of respect for people to go up and down in a pool. It's a hard race, it's a difficult race, but to their credit they did that and, you know, it's not like what I would -- you like to expect it, but you love it when it happens because it's spontaneous. And when things happen like that, that's when it's best.

Q. Chase, following on your last answer, at the age that you are now, Michael had to be brought kicking and screaming to the blocks for the 400 IM. How would you describe your relationship to the event right now?

CHASE KALISZ: I mean, it's always going to be my baby, as much as I try to tell myself I'm a IMer and I can do 200 stroke, which I have been fairly successful with in the past -- I will point out my first World Title was the 200 IM, not the 400 IM, might have fallen four days later.

JACK BAUERLE: That's just because of the way the events were scheduled.

CHASE KALISZ: I think since I overcame my shoulder injury, especially this year, I've more so embraced that event. Like I said, I don't know how much longer I will be doing it.

And I went in today, I didn't really have nerves, like I usually do at big meets. I think it was more so excitement. I get to the pool pretty early to stretch and do my prehab. I couldn't wait to get in the warm-up pool and I'm sitting in the ready room, it was more excitement than nerves.

That's hard to do in the 400 IM.

It's hard to have those feelings for that type of race and I've had it both ways. I'm very much looking forward to doing one more in Tokyo and we will see where we go from there.

Q. How often do you communicate with texts with Michael? What do you gain from those communications?

CHASE KALISZ: We talk every once in a while. Michael is very supportive of everything I do. He will give me a kick in the ass if I need it, and sometimes I certainly need it. Michael really has been like an older brother figure to me in my life since a very, very young age. I mean, I remember interacting with Michael since I was 6 years old and here

we are 21 years later. Having Michael in my life it's very meaningful.

Q. Kieran, take me through the race tonight and how you're feeling after the race, what this does for your confidence and yourself, heading into the 200 Free and what it means to be on the Olympic Team?

KIERAN SMITH: This was my first tapered long course 400 probably since high school. It was really good to have a really big drop. I think I'm capable of a little bit more. Took out the first 200 the way I wanted to, felt comfortable but the third to last 50 and the second to last 50 were 29s, a little too slow for the world stage, and with that opening speed we had today it will bear well for the 200, following, for the next couple of days.

Q. (No microphone.)

KIERAN SMITH: I'm confident for tomorrow. I think I will sleep pretty well tonight. The 200 is all about -- I've never done a meet with prelims, semis, and finals, so I will be going one race at a time trying to get through to the next advancement.

Q. After your race you hugged Caeleb Dressel and I don't know how much you guys train together but that was neat that he embraced you. How much do you help each other out at Florida, the pro's and the amateurs?

KIERAN SMITH: We see each other in passing. We don't get to train as much right now together but honestly after I got out of the pool I was looking for open arms to hug and he was the first guy I saw. It was a really cool moment.

Q. Kieran, what goes through your mind when you are up on that platform, given what's at stake here, obviously making the Olympic Team. What goes through your mind? What keeps you focused as you go ahead into Tokyo?

KIERAN SMITH: Leading up to the race I was extremely -- I was really nervous. I just kind of had to tell myself that I belong here, I belong in the position that I put myself in.

And going into Tokyo I will have to think much of the same.

Q. Kieran, by any chance did the Australian 400 Freestyle times from their Trials pierce your bubble? If so, what was it like seeing those times before you were racing?

KIERAN SMITH: Yeah, the Australians are really lighting it up at their Trials. I said this after my race in media that it's

no joke when the Olympic Gold Medalist gets shut out in his event. That race is going to be really competitive. It will probably take a couple seconds faster than what I was tonight to get on the medal stand.

Q. For Kieran and Chase, what was it like having fans there tonight? It's been a while for all of you guys, I would assume, right, since you have had any sort of crowds? What did that add to it tonight?

CHASE KALISZ: It was spectacular. I could hear the crowd on my breaststroke for sure, and I could definitely hear is on the freestyle. I love that energy. I feed off that energy, I think a lot of us do. I think it's great for our sport. I think everyone is welcoming getting back to more normal, as we progress through this pandemic. I was thrilled to have it.

KIERAN SMITH: Same goes with me. Moving through the college season with SECs and NCAAs just being the athletes, it carried its own type of energy, but this is the best kind of energy that I could hope for before a race.

Q. Kieran, you said before the meet that you wanted to make sure that you put up a time that people around the world would kind of look at and say who is this guy? Do you feel like you did that? Do you feel like you have more work to do heading into Tokyo?

KIERAN SMITH: I think 3:44 for right now is pretty good. I don't know where I rank in the world right now, hopefully it's top 8, top 10, but, you know, there is definitely a little bit of work left to do. Like I said, the back half wasn't perfect. I probably have a little bit more to give on those third to last 50 and second to last 50. But, yeah, I think once I get thrown into a tight race I will be able to do my best for Team USA.

Q. Chase, when did that race start to hurt?

CHASE KALISZ: Honestly, I mean, I will admit I was probably a little soft on that first 200. Then, like I said, I heard the crowd on my breaststroke so I fed off that and, what, 33?

JACK BAUERLE: Yep.

CHASE KALISZ: Maybe a little too quick --

JACK BAUERLE: Never too quick.

CHASE KALISZ: -- on the first 50. I could have done a better job building it. I haven't seen my splits, but I'm sure my breaststroke stood out there. Then just stick your head down and go. Definitely sat on the ground after, but, um,

that's the 400 IM at 27.

Q. Can you describe what that 100 Freestyle feels like when you are in a race and your body is probably starting to feel it?

CHASE KALISZ: I mean, I think Jack will admit it, too, but if you don't feel that you probably didn't do it right. You want to have the feeling of you're going to be absolutely sick. Like, I really -- I remember the moment but I don't remember the moment. I just remember sticking my head down and moving my arms as fast as I can as my body starts to fail. That's how it's always been and you've just got to embrace it.

Q. Kieran, obviously you are someone that's dominated the 500 Free in short course, but it's a different strategy when you take that to long course. What is the biggest challenge for you in translating the success you have had in yards to this format in meters?

KIERAN SMITH: For me the biggest challenge is carrying my momentum from halfway down the pool to the wall. Growing up in Ridgefield, I didn't have access to a long course pool, so that was something that I struggled with in long course, but since coming to Florida I've been able to develop some better power, some efficiency with my stroke to be able to carry me all the way down the pool. You know, the 500 is fun because you get a wall every 11, 12 second, but long course pool is the big boy pool.

Q. Chase, you mentioned after your swim that you have to recover more now. Can you describe what has changed in your recovery and your rest since 2016?

CHASE KALISZ: Yeah. I think Jack will be proud of me for how I've kind of prepared this year. I'm the first one at the pool every single day, an hour to 45 minutes of a strict routine I do to keep my body healthy with various issues I've had. I've stuck with it. I make sure I do my recovery, I have an infrared sauna I hit at my house, lots of NormaTecing a lot more focused on my recovery than I ever have.

It's not an old man's event, and I don't want to call myself old, but this is the first time I visually noticed that I was the oldest person in the 400 IM. I can't tell you how many times I was the youngest person on our US National travel team, the youngest person at Grand Prixes for so long, and I still feel young, feel really young inside, but sometimes my body doesn't agree with that.

I have to be very proactive, and I'm proud of the job I've done this year, and I think I have a great routine set up.

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back in practice and then we can worry about the rest.

THE MODERATOR: Great, thank you very much.

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Q. Do you think in any way the year delay helped Chase given where he was physically and mentally at the beginning of 2020?

JACK BAUERLE: Without question. Yeah. Much more ready this time around than one year ago. There is always a positive in everything, right? I think he became even more of a professional swimmer because of what he spoke about in his answer. He's there taking care of himself beforehand, takes care of himself after. So this is not accidental success.

Now we have a new challenge after we walk out of here, too. We have a 200 IM coming up, and after that we need to get faster, and Kieran feels the same way, and Chase feels the same way. This is great, and now we gotta get going. To answer your question, for Chase, that worked out well, and Jay also.

Q. Jack, I just want to ask about Mel finishing third in that 400 IM tonight. Obviously she always had a smile on her face, but I know that has to be tough after the success she had in that event. Where is she and how will she bounce back in the next couple of days?

JACK BAUERLE: She will bounce back. She'll do whatever she is able to do. I was proud of her tonight. As Chase was saying, Mel is a 29 year old 400 IMer. They're not a dime a dozen, and we are proud of that. She is mentally tough. That's not easy stuff. So obviously we work a lot of 400 IM, and at that age it's not easy stuff. That was a tough race. Hats off to two young ladies that beat her, but I know one thing: She will bounce back, and whatever she does will be her best. It will linger in some ways, but it won't affect her in the next race. Whatever you see will be what she can do. He she is a joy to coach.

CHASE KALISZ: She is tough, really tough.

Q. Chase, you mentioned in the Mixed Zone after the race that you tend to do well on a second taper. What was your taper like going into this meet and is your second taper aimed for Tokyo?

CHASE KALISZ: Yeah, historically I've gone faster every single time. My bad 400 IM in 2019 we didn't have a meet before, so we cannot count that one, but, yes, I think I was 4:09.2, and then 4:08 in the prelims of the 400 IM, and then I went 4:06. I tend to do better on my second taper. Jack wrote a pretty good taper for me this last two weeks but I was throwing in extra yardage here and there, and like I said, I'm 27, I probably need a little more rest than I did before. So first and foremost, we've got work to do the rest of this meet. After that we're going to put in some work

