

U.S. Olympic Team Trials - Swimming

Tuesday, June 15, 2021

Omaha, Nebraska, USA

CHI Health Center

Lilly King

100-Meter Breaststroke

Regan Smith

100-Meter Backstroke

Media Conference

THE MODERATOR: To my left, our newest Olympian in the 100-meter backstroke, Regan Smith, and to my immediate left, our 100-meter breaststroke winner Lilly King.

Q. Lilly, how did you feel about how the race went and having a very mystery Alaska surprise coming along with you? How big of a deal is that for swimming in the country to get a new state like that involved and also just your thoughts on your performance?

LILLY KING: Yeah, speaking strictly on performance, I was not very happy with that race. That was pretty sloppy. But that's okay because that means I definitely have more to work on and more in the tank for the big dance coming up here.

But as far as Lydia, I'm very excited. I wasn't completely shocked. I knew it was going to be a very, very tight race between her and Annie, but yeah, it's awesome. I love to see more representation. I know Indiana is a pretty big swimming state, but coming from a smaller area that's not as well known for swimming, that's a big deal. That's a big deal. It's going to be a really big deal in her hometown and in her home state, and I'm really excited for her.

Q. Lilly, with Australia and everything going on there, was it important for you to kind of send a message to them?

LILLY KING: I feel like this has been blown up a little bit. Pretty much all I said is that I believe in our team and that we have the possibility and the chance to win all the gold medals. I wasn't trying to start anything up, but as always it's been spun that way. But they're having a really fast trials and we're having a really fast trials, so we'll meet up in Tokyo and see what happens.



U.S. OLYMPIC TEAM TRIALS



Q. Can you talk a little bit more about the relief you felt tonight coming into this race as a favorite and kind of the struggles you've had over the past year?

REGAN SMITH: Yeah, I know that everyone is in the same boat with the struggles of this past year, and yeah, going into this race it's a very tight and talented field, and yeah, it was tough getting up there, but I think it made me a lot stronger.

I am very relieved. It's hard to put it into words. I'm still like trying to let my emotions sink in and trying to make this feel more real, but yeah, the relief I felt, it showed on my face. It was a crazy field, and to top it was very special.

Q. Regan, can you take us through your race from start to finish? What was on your mind as you walked out? How aware were you of what was happening? And what was the feeling like down the last 50 meters?

REGAN SMITH: Definitely tunnel vision when I walked out. I had no clue what was going on around me. I was just trying to positive self-talk with myself, tell myself that I could do it. That's what I always have to do to get myself through these races.

There was a lot of adrenaline, absolutely, in that first 50, and I think it showed with my split there, and I definitely felt it coming home, and I could see girls splashing on either side of me and I knew it was going to be a close race down the stretch there, and there was just no other thought in my mind except for, gosh, just get your hand on the wall. Yeah, I'm very happy with how it played out.

Q. Take me through the reactions, the emotions, what you're feeling as you finished that race, how much it meant, the relief, the excitement, and I also want to get your thoughts on how you go forward over the next couple days but you have two more events that are big for you.

REGAN SMITH: Yeah, so there were a ton of emotions after that race, and there still are, honestly. Yeah, I'm still trying to process everything, but it's very special. That was a great race, and I could have executed some things a little bit better. I had a great semis. I wish I could have



repeated that, but that's okay, I'm very happy with that race overall. Lots of relief, absolutely, and I'm very happy, and it was very special.

Yeah, now going forward, I'm just excited to kind of have some of the pressure off my back and just enjoy the experience, enjoy being here, enjoy getting some more practice racing some great girls. I think it'll be a lot of fun over these next couple days instead of a lot of stress like these past few days have been, so I'm just really looking forward to it.

Q. Lilly, you've been a veteran on Team USA for a while now, but now as a veteran Olympian you're seeing all these young kids make the team and having that chance. What is it going to be like for you as one of those veterans that gets to kind of be more of a leader to the group in the Olympic setting?

LILLY KING: I'm really enjoying being on the other side of things. I was very, very fortunate to have several veteran Olympians being really just fantastic to me and great leaders and great mentors, Missy, Katie Meili, a lot of people, Beisel, Schmitt, like the whole list of people. I was really fortunate to have them to guide me along the way, and I'm excited to be able to do that now and do the same thing that they did for me.

Q. Lilly, you have dominated breaststroke for so long. Do you change your strategy as you evolve, or is it always the same? Can you walk us through your strategy?

LILLY KING: I genuinely don't think that much before my races. I kind of just go with the flow and see how I'm feeling and see what the field is going to do. I feel like I've said this a thousand times tonight, but Lydia and I swim opposite races, very, very different. I'm very high tempo, very front end. She's low tempo, back end. I think it's going to be interesting seeing how that plays out later.

But yeah, I just kind of go with the flow and see what the field is going to do and then decide what I'm going to do.

Q. Lilly, you seemed to really thrive and enjoy it when you're less certain of the outcome. And then also, have you not lost a long course 100 breaststroke since December 2015 or is that not accurate?

LILLY KING: That's correct. I'd remember. Yeah, I mean, I love those high-pressure situations. I never think of it as me not knowing the outcome. I know what's going to happen, but everybody else doesn't. I go in confident, and that's the only way I can do it. Going in not being sure of myself is not a good way to race. I like to go in and do my

thing and show up.

Q. Lilly, I'm wondering what you said to Annie after the race and where she seems to be heading into the 200 breaststroke.

LILLY KING: We didn't really talk much. Just gave her a hug and moved on. We're not done with the meet. Her big event is coming up, and I think she knows what she's got to do and get the job done.

You can't get caught up in the emotions of this meet. You kind of have to be a bit of a robot to be successful. Obviously overcoming third place is a horrible thing someone has to go through, but she's tough, and she knows that the 200 is coming up, and that's her bread and butter and that's where she's going to get it, so I think she's excited and looking forward to it.

Q. Not to step too much out of this moment for tonight, but given what's happened internationally with Kaylee breaking her world record, what was your reaction to that and what is your confidence level of being able to step up and race her in a different environment at the Olympics?

REGAN SMITH: Yeah, my reaction, I was honestly very happy for her. I mean, she'd been very close to it multiple times, and so it was cool to see her grab it. We have a great relationship. We don't know each other super well, but I always send her a congratulatory text. I was really genuinely honestly happy for her, and then it inspired me because I've had a tough year, I've had my fair share of bad swims this year, and seeing her do so amazing over this whole pandemic has been extremely inspiring.

It's just motivating me to put my head down now that I've made it and now that I can move on and compete with her head-to-head, it's making me really excited to put my head down and train for a little bit, clean some things up and see what I can do in Tokyo.

Now that this part is behind me, I'm full steam ahead, ready to go, yeah.

Q. I know that your coach, Coach Parratto, has a daughter that's an Olympic diver, and he's obviously been through the whole parenting thing of guiding someone into the Olympics. What kind of advice has he given you as you're trying to join Jessica in that vein of being someone that's so close to him and also making their Olympic dreams come true?

REGAN SMITH: It's great, and it brings such a great sense of comfort knowing that he's so experienced in this

area, and he also has coached Jenny Thompson, who was an incredible Olympian in her day, as well. There isn't really like any specific pieces of advice that he gives me. I think it's more just his presence that really kind of helps me just feel more confident and more like, you know, I can do this and I belong.

It's great, and I just wish Jess was here. I know this makes no sense and she's over doing her own thing, but I was so proud of her, and it got me really excited too.

This whole week has been special for me, and I know it's so special for the Parratto family, so it's great.

Q. Regan, can you talk about the youth movement here? You guys came in with a lot of expectations as you know, but collectively as a group, the people with the most expectations that were teenagers have made the team. What is that like to see a group of you guys do it as you kind of like usher in the beginning of your era, I guess?

REGAN SMITH: It's very cool and different. I've been very used to being the baby. Lilly likes to call me -- yeah, it's interesting, and I think I'll have like a really different experience now at this Games because I've been so used to being the youngest and now I'm not the youngest and I have kids who are my age and I have some kids who are younger than me. It's very cool. It really is. It's awesome to have some girls my age that I can relate a little bit to better. It's awesome being with the vets. It's been amazing and I've learned so much from them, but I think it'll be cool to have some people who are my age who I can --

LILLY KING: You don't have to hang out with me all the time? Yeah.

REGAN SMITH: No, but it's awesome. It's very cool to see.

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