

U.S. Olympic Team Trials - Swimming

Tuesday, June 15, 2021
Omaha, Nebraska, USA
CHI Health Center

Kieran Smith
Townley Haas
Drew Kibler
Andrew Seliskar
Ryan Murphy

100-Meter Backstroke
200-Meter Freestyle
Media Conference

THE MODERATOR: Welcome to our newest slate of Olympians heading to Tokyo this summer. We have starting from the left of the podium or right if you are looking at it, we have Andrew Seliskar, we have Drew Kibler, Tommy Haas, Kieran Smith. Those are the four men who finished top four in the men's 200 free. And then on the end here we have Olympian Ryan Murphy, who won the 100-meter back.

Q. Ryan, can you talk about kind of your journey the last five years from Rio until now? Your results have kind of been up and down. What's been going on if you can summarize it?

RYAN MURPHY: Sure, I'll try to make it as concise as possible. I guess after 2016, went back to college for my senior year, really put a big emphasis on the academic side, and in 2017, one of my big goals was to try to graduate with above a 3.5 and I was hovering at that line going into my senior year, so that was kind of my main goal after '16.

I was pretty disappointed with the results that summer, so came back, really wanted to kind of prove to myself that I was still good at swimming, and that kind of propelled me to a good year in 2018.

2019 we had a little bit of a coaching change and tried out some new things in practice, and some of those were good, some of those weren't good, and then the past two years it's just been really dialed in trying to prepare for



U.S. OLYMPIC TEAM TRIALS



Tokyo.

Q. You guys swim against each other a lot, especially the NCAAs. That's what the meet comes down to. You're instantly now teammates, not competitors. Even though you're still competitors, what is that like to have relationships change that quickly and just how cool is it in swimming to have those kind of dynamics?

ANDREW SELISKAR: No, it's great. When you've been swimming kind of at a high level for a long time, you get to know a lot of the different faces on the pool deck. As much as we are competitors or former competitors in a collegiate sense, we get to come together for Team USA. We get to come together for this training camp coming up in a couple weeks, and just looking forward to getting to know these guys a little bit more and racing fast in Tokyo.

DREW KIBLER: Yeah, it was great. After the race, being able to give Selly here like a hug and a fist bump, after my freshman year, like just wanting nothing more than to be him, so it was just fun just to be able to embrace him and we can both celebrate all of our great swims this evening. Yeah, definitely a fun change in perspective.

TOMMY HAAS: Yeah, I mean, I've always thought swimming is pretty cool in that way. I mean, Andrew and I have been racing since we were 15 or 16. I can remember swimming against him in club meets, 500 frees and stuff like that. It's cool to go from racing against him in club and then in college and then joining a few national teams with him, and Drew obviously goes to Texas, as well, racing with him and stuff.

Yeah, it's exciting. I'm looking forward to being teammates with these guys on the national level, again, for some of them, but it's exciting.

Q. For all of the 200 freestylers, obviously the 200 free has been a little point of weakness in the United States the past couple years and there's three countries that are really good right now. What are your thoughts on the challenge ahead of Team USA, four gold medals in a row, of trying to continue that legacy and put together a really strong relay for Tokyo?

TOMMY HAAS: Well, I thought tonight was a pretty good

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showing of that. You know, we were talking about it warming down, it took -- in 2016 I think sixth place was 1:47 mid and Carson was eighth this year with a 46 mid. I think just that kind of shows we had -- what were you?

DREW KIBLER: 63, something like that.

TOMMY HAAS: 46 low to be fourth, I think that's pretty telling in my opinion for -- and for how Tokyo is going to go.

DREW KIBLER: I also think Olympic Trials is a pretty challenging meet to put up some fast times, and I think it definitely gives us some experience and some direction on how we can handle those pressures moving forward and only get better in the next coming weeks.

ANDREW SELISKAR: Yeah, I'm confident. I think we've all got a little bit more left in the tank for Tokyo and excited to see what we can put together.

KIERAN SMITH: Yeah, that was a big final there. Drew, you were 45, right? So three of us 45 with Andrew being 45 before. I mean, for the relay goes, Townley has been 43 on relays. I think we'll be all set.

Q. Drew, I don't know if you got a chance to watch the time trial there at the end?

DREW KIBLER: I was in doping control, but literally I ran -- I could hear the crowd. I ran from the crowd to the pool deck.

Q. Did you catch the end of it maybe?

DREW KIBLER: I caught the end of it.

Q. Tell me a little bit more about Jake. You guys obviously grew up in the same hometown, same club team. What's it like to see him have such a monster swim like that?

DREW KIBLER: I can't think of anybody who deserves it more. I was so over the moon for him. He is such an incredible trainer and just a really, really great guy. More than anything about his talent, he's just a really, really good friend and a good person, and so it just means even more to me to see him succeed in something that means so much to him. He deserves every bit of it, and I'm so excited for him.

Q. Ryan, obviously the 100 back really competitive right now with the guys in Russia mostly and Xu Jiayu, who you've raced at worlds. What is your approach heading toward the Olympics and knowing you're going to be in some really competitive events?

Obviously you've got the pedigree, but it's not going to be easy, so what's your approach to handling that?

RYAN MURPHY: Yeah, I mean, I can't control what those guys are doing, so my goal over these next five weeks is just to give my coaches as much feedback as possible so that when I show up behind the blocks in Tokyo I'm as ready to go as I can be. I think if we do that, we'll be in a good spot.

Q. Ryan, we had a couple what some people would say surprises in both of the back strokes tonight with who finished second in both races. It seems like the 100 back over the years has maybe been the race that that kind of stuff happens the most. What is it about either the race or the depth in this country? What is it that keeps producing these thrilling finishes and these great upsets?

RYAN MURPHY: I mean, man, if I knew the answer to that, I'd be coaching instead of swimming. I mean, it's just incredible to see what Hunter was able to do. I had an interview after the race, and I was like, this guy just keeps on the same improvement curve, he's going to go 49 in Tokyo. It's super cool. I literally met him yesterday. Really nice guy. I'm excited to go behind the blocks with him.

Q. I just realized nobody asked you yet in this group how you feel making your second Olympic team.

RYAN MURPHY: Oh, I'm stoked. It's incredible. I expected myself to make it. That's what I really wanted. But it's just really cool to feel that recognition. Like I was able to get -- and my brother was the guy handing everyone the pen to sign the drum, so I'm able to give my brother a hug real quick and I was able to see my mom and my girlfriend in the crowd right after that ceremony.

It's just really cool, like so many people have a hand in the success, and so I mean, I think it really means a lot to me to kind of honor them with making another team.

Q. Drew, I know you're thrilled to make the Olympic team; how do you balance that? I'm sure you would have rather gone like 27 hundredths of a second faster. How do those two emotions go with you on a night like this?

DREW KIBLER: Well, I think in a field of competitors this strong, this talented, this hardworking, I think there's not a single guy in that field that wasn't trying to win tonight. So shout-out to Townley and Kieran for putting on a great race. Honestly at this point I'm just thankful to have made the team. Of course I would love a chance to represent the United States internationally in an individual event. I still

have a chance in the 100, as well, but I think honestly this just gives me more motivation to keep working hard, keep improving, and just see where it goes from here.

Q. Did you get a chance to watch Jake's race?

DREW KIBLER: Yeah, I did get a chance to watch Jake's race. I spoke about that a little bit earlier. Extremely impressive, inspiring. I was just blown away by it. That takes a lot of heart, a lot of bravery, and he earned it 100 percent.

Q. Can you tell us about your tattoos and if they have any meaning behind them?

DREW KIBLER: Yeah, they absolutely do have some meaning. I've always wanted tattoos since I was a kid, and honestly the meaning behind them, it's kind of a long story so maybe we can save that for another time. But yeah, honestly, I don't really know what else to say about it.

A lot of thought went into them. They're going to be on my body forever, so I want it to be something that kind of empowers me, and so they're definitely a source of some mental strength in my opinion.

Q. Townley, can you tell us a little bit how your perspective has changed from the last Olympic cycle to this one, and also for Kieran after that, can you talk a little bit about how your perspective has changed over the course of three days with so much that has happened?

TOWNLEY HAAS: Yeah, I mean, obviously this is a little bit different than last time with everything that's happened, waiting a year and all that stuff. Yeah, it's definitely different. It's pretty weird. Michael actually said when he gave me the award, he said, "You're a veteran now," and it honestly hadn't hit me until he said it to me, and I was like, I am a veteran.

It'll be a new experience for me even though it is not my first time kind of being the, quote-unquote older or guy or the veteran on the team, or one of them. Yeah, I'm excited for it, though.

KIERAN SMITH: As for the past three days, what can I say? When we got here, I still haven't been on a long course national team trip yet, and once I won the 400, everything -- I mean, I just got swamped right away. I was really busy on that first night, didn't know really how to go about it. But it was a good experience, and happy to be keeping the ball rolling with the 200 tonight.

After the first night I was up in bed for a little while just

thinking about the enormity of the accomplishment, but moving through the 200, the prelims, semis and finals, I kind of got grounded a little bit and just moved forward with that.

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