

U.S. Olympic Team Trials - Swimming

Saturday, June 19, 2021

Omaha, Nebraska, USA

CHI Health Center

Phoebe Bacon

200 Meter Backstroke

Rhyan White

200 Meter Backstroke

Media Conference



U.S. OLYMPIC TEAM TRIALS



this year.

Q. Same question for Phoebe. Is obviously you were more known as a 100 Backstroker for a long time. Your 200 has come together in the last few years. What has made the difference, and did you ever think if you made the Olympic Team that it would be in the 200 Backstroke?

PHOEBE BACON: I honestly have to say I never thought it would be in the 200 Backstroke. But in the past year the different kind of training that I've incorporated into training, I've become more of a 200.

Q. (No microphone.)

PHOEBE BACON: A lot more 50s, working on that back half of speed, being able to hold pace constantly and then longer stuff working on 150s and 200s, constantly in practice. To make sure I can finish my races strong.

Q. Rhyan, being a Utah native, I don't know how many swimmers from the state of Utah have made the Olympic Team, but what is it like? We have had a swimmer from Alaska make the team, and now a swimmer from Utah. What is it like to represent your state, which is not known to produce many great swimmers like yourself, but what is it like to represent Utah and be an Olympic swimmer for that state?

RHYAN WHITE: I would say it's really special. I've had a lot of people reach out to me from home that they're somewhat friends or old friends or old family friends that I had no idea they were watching. It kind of gives me a little honor, I would say, to represent the state.

Q. If you could tell us how the race unfolded from your point of view and your emotions when you realized you had touched the wall first and second?

PHOEBE BACON: I knew that my competitors were going to go out pretty quick, and usually I like to pace myself that first 50, so seeing them on my sides I could tell they were going for it, and I just had to stay calm and know that my back 100 was really where I needed to push it. I felt like I achieved that in the race, and then looking up at the scoreboard, it's a lot of emotions. Then you see first,

THE MODERATOR: Good evening. Joined this evening by the two newest members of the Olympic Team. Pleased to announce we have nominated Phoebe Bacon and Rhyan White, both in the Women's 200 Back this evening.

Q. Phoebe, coming from Nation's Capital Swim Club and to be the fourth from that club with Katie Ledecky and others, what is it like to be sitting there as an Olympian?

PHOEBE BACON: It's definitely an honor to represent Nation's Capital on this high of a level. I'm happy for how far the club has come and what it has become. I can't wait to kind of represent the US with other Nation's Capital swimmers.

Q. Rhyan, unbelievable backstroke competition in the United States and you are the representative in both backstrokes for Tokyo. What's gone into your rise and your level to get this far?

RHYAN WHITE: I would say that I'm just really excited to represent the US in both of the backstroke events. We have Phoebe and Regan going, too, in the 100 and 200. I would say that I'm mostly just excited.

Q. Rhyan, this has been a huge year for you. You made a lot of headway in the NCAAs this year. What has gone into this rise quick for you from good to great.

RHYAN WHITE: I would say last year was kind of cut short, from NCAAs being cancelled. I was really bummed about that. I think that having Ozzie Quevedo as my coach has given me confidence, and I think there was a lot of unfinished business from last year, so tried to roll that into

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second, and you're just like, oh my God. It's just such a special moment. Now getting to share it with Rhyan, that's incredible.

RHYAN WHITE: I would say similar for me. I try to focus on myself a lot during the race. I was trying to keep up with Regan for the first 100, I think we all know she likes to take it out.

Over the course of this meet I know that I swim better if I have no expectations and focus on myself during the race and try not to look at the big, huge scoreboard above all of us. To see first and second for us is really exciting. I was a little surprised but mostly excited.

Q. Some races here at Trials, the race is sometimes for second place. The backstroke has never been there. It's been one of the deepest strokes and there are: 10, 12 contenders in both distances every year, every kind of meet there is. What is that like for you guys, every meet, whether it be NAAs or even a conference championship meet in college or USA Nationals or Trials knowing that that many people have a shot every time? What is that like for you guys?

RHYAN WHITE: I like it. I think it's fun to just, say, it's anybody's game. There is never someone you know that is going to win every time. It's not a toss-up of who is getting second. Anybody can win.

PHOEBE BACON: I think it makes it more exciting for the audience. The tighter races tend to get the crowd on their feet and cheering louder. As she said, it's exciting to see it can be anybody's game for first and second.

Q. Rhyan, I'm wondering if you can tell us about your journey through this sport and when you started, if you had -- if it was your first love or were there other sports that you enjoyed playing before swimming or while you were starting swimming?

RHYAN WHITE: I started swimming when I was four or five just with country club -- I have three older brothers and an older sister, and they all did it, too, so we kind of just did it all together.

I did a little bit of power tumbling and cheer. I cheered in high school, which was really fun. I think just ever since fourth and fifth grade I said, I'm a swimmer and I really love swimming.

Q. Phoebe, Katie was recalling how she was your buddy when you were in pre-K. Walk us through that. What are your earliest interactions and recollections with Katie?

PHOEBE BACON: She was right. We grew up going to the same schools, and when I was around -- I think it was kindergarten, she was in fifth grade, maybe a little older. You get assigned a buddy, an older student that you kind of get to spend a day here and there with during the year.

I do remember spending a day with her. Neither of us I think had the knowledge of kind of where swimming was going to take us then, it was more just I was meeting somebody older than me. As she went on to 2012, it just, like, opened my mind up to, wow, maybe swimming can get me this far as well kind of thing.

Q. Phoebe, following up on that, has Katie been talking to you, or texting you during the meet, encouraging you, saying anything to you?

PHOEBE BACON: Yeah, every time we pass, whether it be in the warm-down pool or over by the massage tables or something, she is always there saying, good luck or great job. I would say I'm doing the same, not only through -- just because we're an end cap connection but, again, like, she has known me since I was, like, four or five years old, so she has definitely been a big supporter through this whole meet.

Q. There is so much tradition in the last 10, 15 years in the 100 and 200 Back with Natalie and Missy and Maya Dirado, winning gold medals. What is it like to add to that tradition, be part of such a rich event in the United States?

PHOEBE BACON: Well, all three of those names have just been names that I have looked up to kind of my whole swimming career. Now to be kinda thrown into that mix of names is just incredible. I cannot wait to represent the country and be part of the legacy that we have, the 200 Back.

RHYAN WHITE: I would have to say the same. It's really cool to see like -- I remember I met Missy Franklin at a Sectionals meet in 2015. My friend thought it was so funny, I told her I was going to the Olympics. But looking back, I would just say, she handled it well, she said, okay, yeah, you should do that!

I think it's cool. It's people we looked up to, and now there are hopefully some kids looking up to us as well.

Q. (No microphone.)

RHYAN WHITE: I think it was at Mt. Hood, in Washington.

Q. If we had not had the pandemic, if the Olympics



had gone off as they were scheduled to last year, do you think you guys would have made the team? Do you think the pandemic helped you, the extra year of training?

RHYAN WHITE: I think I would have been very hopeful. I'm not sure. No one knows what would have happened last year. It's frustrating sometimes, but I would say that I'm thankful that it happened because it gave me an extra year to get stronger and faster.

PHOEBE BACON: Yeah, I definitely don't think my 200 Backstroke would have been where it was a year ago. I think my head would have been more focused toward the 100. So having this entire year to switch and learn how to swim a 200 has definitely been a big help. As Rhyan said, I don't know where I would have placed a year ago. I would say this year definitely helped.

THE MODERATOR: Thanks, everyone.

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