US Speedskating Media Clips

10 Athletes To Know For The U.S. Olympic Team Trials For Short Track Speedskating

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Eight spots on the U.S. Olympic Team are on the line as the fastest in American short track speedskating gather in Kearns, Utah, this weekend for the U.S. Olympic Team Trials.

The U.S. has earned quota spots for five men and three women to represent Team USA in PyeongChang this February based on results from four world cup events earlier this year. Who exactly will occupy those spots on the Olympic starting line will be settled this weekend at the Utah Olympic Oval.

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Three American women will compete in the Olympic 1,500-meter, and two in each the 500 and 1,000. The men will be represented by three athletes in the 500 and 1,500, two in the 1,000 and a four-man team in the 5,000-meter relay, where the Americans set a new world record last month at a world cup in Shanghai.

Two finals are competed for each of the three distances this week, and athletes earn points based on their two placements in each distance. They are then selected to the team based on their points total per distance and, potentially, based on their overall classification as well (their total points earned across all three distances).

Finals in the 1,500-meter will be conducted on Friday, followed by the 500- and 1,000-meter on Saturday and Sunday, respectively. The entire event will be broadcast live on NBCOlympics.com and will appear on TV on NBC Sports Network from 8:30 to 10 p.m. ET Friday, and on NBC Saturday from 2:30 to 4:00 p.m., and Sunday from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.
As the clock ticks down to the trials, here are 10 speedskating hopefuls to watch:

Maame Biney

Just 17 years old, Biney is already being heralded as the future of U.S. women’s short track. The Ghana native, who came to the U.S. at age 5, earned that mantle after taking bronze in the 500-meter at the 2017 junior world championships and finishing as the top qualifier to this year’s world cup squad ahead of a trio of Olympians. Biney began as a figure skater but switched to speedskating after being told she skated too quickly for the other discipline. Twelve years on, the fast pace of the sport remains appealing, especially in the 500-meter, Biney’s favorite event.

Keith Carroll Jr.

Carroll earned his first world cup win with the U.S. men’s 5,000-meter relay squad as they set a surprise world record at the Shanghai World Cup last month in China. It was a big moment for the 26-year-old, who represented the Team USA at five inline skating world championships but gave up the sport to chase his Olympic dream on ice. In his three world championships appearances, Carroll’s best results have come as a member of the 5,000-meter relay team, a trend he’d love to continue this winter in South Korea.

J.R. Celski

The only person in the 16-man field with Olympic experience, the 27-year-old Celski is a three-time Olympic medalist, having won a silver medal with the 5,000-meter relay team in Sochi in 2014, as well as bronze medals in the 5,000 relay and the 1,500 in Vancouver in 2010. Celski also has a handful of medals from world championships, including gold in the 5,000 relay from 2009 and silver in the 500-meter in 2014. More recently, he distinguished himself by anchoring the relay team during its world record run last month in China.

Lana Gehring

A member of the team that won a bronze medal in the 3,000-meter
relay at the Vancouver Games in 2010, Gehring missed the 2014 Olympic team and then switched to long track speedskating. After two seasons on the 400-meter track, she returned to the short track world cup circuit this year. So far the five-time world championships medalist has enjoyed a strong second wind, setting personal bests in the 500 and 1,000 already this season.

Thomas Hong

Hong’s roots in the sport run deep — his mother went into labor with him while at a speedskating rink in Seoul — but it’s his own ambition that pushes him forward. The up-and-coming 20-year-old acknowledges that it would be “a huge honor” to return to the country of his birth to compete at the Olympic Winter Games as a member of Team USA, and stands in good stead of achieving that goal after helping the U.S. men set the world record in the 5,000-meter relay at the Shanghai World Cup. He followed up with a bronze medal in the 5,000 relay at the world cup in Seoul a week later, his last major competition before the Olympic trials. Hong competed at the inaugural Winter Youth Olympic Games in 2012.

Jessica Kooreman

Fourth in the 1,000-meter at the 2014 Sochi Games and sixth in the 1,500, Kooreman knows about the glory of making it to the Olympics as well as the frustration of finishing just off the podium. A skater almost from the time she could walk, she once dominated the world of inline skating, winning 16 world championships titles before switching to ice in her 20s. The veteran of the U.S. team at 34, she is still at the top of her game, evidenced by her personal best in the 500-meter this past August in Utah.

John-Henry Krueger

Like teammate Hong, Krueger also has a special connection to South Korea: the 22-year-old lived and trained in Seoul, where he raced for the Korean National Sport University. The Olympic Oval in Kearns has been good to him, too: It was there in 2014 that he won his first and second individual world cup title, a 500-meter gold in 2014. In addition to being part of the world record team in Shanghai, he set a
new personal best in the 1,000 in China, bolstering his case for Olympic inclusion four years after a bout of swine flu forced him to withdraw from the 2014 Olympic trials.

Ryan Pivirotto

After a successful junior career, Pivirotto has been steadily making his mark on the national team. This year, he was named to the U.S. world cup team, joining the likes of Carroll, Celski, Hong and Krueger on the international circuit, and he set a personal best in the 1,500 at the Seoul World Cup. Kearns will be the second Olympic trials for the Ann Arbor, Michigan, native, who also participated in 2014.

Katherine Reutter-Adamek

After winning an Olympic silver medal in the 1,000-meter and bronze medal in the 3,000-meter relay from the Vancouver Games, Reutter-Adamek became the first American woman since Bonnie Blair in 1986 to win a short track world title, which she did by winning the 1,500 in 2011. Spurred by injuries and a desire to spend more time with her family, she retired in 2013 but returned to the sport three years later with the intention of making a run for PyeongChang. So far, so good for the 29-year-old who trains in Kearns: She earned a spot on the U.S. world cup team last season and earlier this year, winning the qualifier in the 1,000.

April Shin

Shin competed at the 2016 Winter Youth Olympic Games in Lillehammer, Norway, skating in the mixed team relay. Nearly two years on, an older and more experienced Shin will take the ice at her first U.S. Olympic Team Trials. The petite 19-year-old, 13th overall at the 2016 junior world championships, has been praised for her intuitive feel for the ice. She’s especially comfortable in the 1,500-meter, her best distance.

_Blythe Lawrence is a journalist based in Seattle. She has covered two Olympic Games and is a freelance contributor to TeamUSA.org on behalf of Red Line Editorial, Inc._
Luca Lim was just 10 years old when he found himself glued to the 2010 Vancouver Olympics, enraptured by the speed and grace of short-track speedskating. He had dabbled in hockey before, but glowing on his television were elite athletes whirring around the ice at up to 40 mph atop tiny blades of metal.

“It was extremely exciting,” he said.

Fortunately for Lim, he happened to live in the Washington area, a burgeoning hotbed for the sport, featuring active speedskating clubs, world-class coaching and more and more promising young Olympic hopefuls.

Lim, now 17, is one of the 32 short-track speedskaters competing at the U.S. Olympic trials, which begin Friday in Kearns, Utah. Of that group, eight are from the Washington area, having honed their skills at local clubs and eager to punch their tickets to the PyeongChang Olympics.

That group includes Laurel’s Thomas Hong, who was part of a relay team that broke a world record last month in Shanghai; Reston’s Maame Biney, a 17-year-old who took bronze at this year’s junior world championships; Fairfax’s Brandon Kim, 16, who won the U.S. men’s junior title last year and North Potomac’s Gabriella Hachem, 19, who won the ladies’ title.
This surge of talent from the Washington area is no accident. Nathaniel Mills, three-time Olympian and a founder of the DC-ICE urban speedskating program, explained that more than a decade ago, the local clubs bulked up their offerings and created a pipeline for Korean coaches.

“It’s been a nonstop parade of expertise and motivated individuals since then,” he said. “It’s been a bit of a revolving door, but the commonality has been this commitment to excellence.”

The area coaches now include Potomac Speedskating Club’s Simon Cho, a bronze medal winner at the 2010 Olympics, Dominion Speedskating’s Kim Yun-Mi, who won gold medals at the 1994 and 1998 Winter Games, and United Capital Blades’ Hyun Jung Lee, a former member of the Korean national team. And the end result has been a culture of both well-honed talent and heightened expectations. Athletes from the D.C. area take up the sport at a young age and aren’t content to skate a couple of laps on weekends or target regional competitions.

Lim was hooked right away, and within a couple weeks of setting foot on ice, he was skating six times a week. Eight years later, his whole life is built around the sport. Since January, he has been living and training in South Korea. He is a senior taking online courses through George Washington University Online High School, which allows him to spend eight hours a day training and tend to his classwork in evenings or between workouts.

To compete at a high level, many speedskaters make similar sacrifices. At 20, Hong is the youngest member of the U.S. men’s team that has been competing in World Cup events. He was born in South Korea, moved to the United States when he was 5 and gravitated toward the sport shortly thereafter.
“At the time, it was just another way to be a part of the community,” he said, “especially for a new family in the States.”

The sport is much more popular in South Korea. Hong visited family there most summers, spending as much time on the ice as possible and training year-round. He grew quickly in the sport and at 16 was the youngest competitor at the 2014 Olympic trials, where he finished 11th and missed out on the squad that went to the Sochi Games.

Hong completed his freshman year at the University of Maryland before putting college on hold and relocating to Salt Lake City to train full-time with U.S. Speedskating, his heart set on competing at the PyeongChang Games.

“Growing up in Howard County where education is a big focus for families and where it’s really hard to sacrifice education for the sake of sport, it didn’t always seem logical,” Hong said. “But at the same time, me and my family, we knew that I’d have to make a sacrifice to pursue this passion.”

A year later, he has a good chance of qualifying for the Olympics and representing the United States in the country of his birth. Of the 32 skaters, just eight will qualify for PyeongChang — five men and three women. Hong has been a part of the men’s 5,000-meter relay team that twice found the podium on the World Cup circuit this year: the first-place, world-record race in Shanghai, which marked the first U.S. win in the race since 2013, and then a bronze medal performance a week later in Seoul. Hong’s top individual race this year was a 10th-place finish in a 500-meter race, his favorite distance.

“I think it’s a test of true skill — a perfect balance of reckless speed while also maintaining control,” he said. “I’ve always gravitated toward sprinting. I think that’s just the way my body has been. As I’ve gotten older, I’ve learned to appreciate the finesse of it as well.”
Skaters such as Hong, Lim, Kim and Biney are young enough to be contenders for the 2022 Olympics as well. But they already represent a generation of skaters who have taken advantage of the resources that flocked to the region more than a decade ago and turned Washington into a breeding ground for short-track speedskating in the United States.

“The skaters have high expectations of themselves,” Mills said. “They push themselves in practice to an unbelievable extent. That’s kind of what it takes. Their goal isn’t to necessarily be the best in the area or even the U.S. Their goal is: How can I compete with the world’s best?”
Established names headline U.S. short-track Olympic Trials, but inexperienced youngsters must rise

Olympic team headed for South Korea will be determined this weekend at Utah Olympic Oval


J.R. Celski penned a tweet last spring that resonates more and more as the 2018 Olympic Games inch closer.

“Most people aim to do amazing things when everybody is watching,” he wrote. “Make it a habit to do them when nobody is.”

It has remained atop Celski’s Twitter profile over 18 months later, his “pinned tweet,” that he wants every one of his 27,000-plus followers to see when they pay a visit to one of his social media profiles. Celski, a three-time Olympic medalist in short-track speedskating, has made a habit of pressing on.

The years after a silver medal in the men’s relay at the Sochi Games haven’t been easy. The 27-year-old who burst onto the scene at the Vancouver Games in 2010 as a double medalist has been riddled with injury after injury. Surgery to correct a labrum injury in his hip, then a torn MCL injury that kept him off the ice for an extended period of time was followed by a pesky back injury.

Celski believes he’s finally back to himself.

“Definitely,” he said. “It’s been years, for sure.”

All eyes will be on Celski and the U.S. short-track team this weekend at the Utah Olympic Oval as the eight guaranteed spots on the line for the 2018 Games in PyeongChang, South Korea, will be assigned after trials commence Friday evening in Kearns.

“It’s natural to doubt yourself when you’re faced with those injuries, where physically you don’t know if you’re going to be able to come back from,” said Celski, who won a World Cup bronze earlier this year, his 25th World Cup medal of his career. “I definitely had a lot of
fears and doubts, and it took a lot to mentally push through and tell myself that the goal is ahead still and I need to get there.”

He’s almost there.

Alongside Celski, skaters such as John-Henry Krueger, Thomas Hong and Keith Carroll Jr., are expected to contend for the men’s slots. Olympic veterans such as Jessica Kooreman, Katherine Reutter-Adamek and Lana Gehring headline the women’s side. But a 17-year-old up-and-comer is turning heads this year.

Maame Biney is one of many youngsters aiming to cement her first Olympics appearance this weekend. Biney, who was born in Ghana before moving to the U.S. at 5, eventually took up speedskating in Virginia. She slowly moved up the national ladder before relocating to Utah this summer. She won bronze at the 2017 short-track junior world championships earlier this year.

“Since I’ve been here,” she said, “I’ve woken up and I’m like, ‘Holy cow, I’m training with the people I have to skate with in order to be on the team, and they’re all so good.’”

Outside of the established names, it’s a relatively inexperienced group chasing their lifelong dreams this weekend. U.S. short-track coach Anthony Barthell understands that, too.

“To prepare them for this weekend, it’s a four-year ordeal,” he said. “Once I came in two years ago, the one thing I kept stressing to them was to take every competition like you’ve done it before. You’ve been there, done it, no matter what stage you’re on. I think that’s where they are right now.”

Celski, meanwhile, is one of the few vets who will make sure to calm nerves if necessary.

“There’s definitely a lot of anxiety from everybody,” he said. “It’s a big weekend, and everyone wants to do well, obviously. It could be the peak of some people’s careers to make this team.”
Five things to know about the U.S. Olympic Team Trials for short track

http://www.kob.com/sports/five-things-to-know-about-the-us-olympic-team-trials-for-short-track/4704564/

Where and when are the U.S. Olympic Short Track Trials?

The U.S. Olympic Team Trials for short track speed skating will take place from Dec. 15 to 17 in Kearns, Utah at the Utah Olympic Oval. The men's and women's 1500m will take place on Friday the 15th, the men's and women's 500m on Saturday the 16th, and the men's and women's 1000m on Sunday the 17th.

How can I watch?

All three days of competition can be watched live on NBCOlympics.com, where every race from beginning to end will be livestreamed.

Short track fans can also follow the action live on TV, where the second competition session on each day will be shown. The short track U.S. Olympic Trials will air on NBCSN on Friday from 8:30 to 10:00 p.m. ET, on NBC on Saturday from 2:30 to 4:00 p.m. ET, and on NBC on Sunday from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m.

Who's competing at the U.S. Olympic Short Track Trials?

32 athletes, 16 men and 16 women, have been invited to compete at the short track Olympic Trials. The roster includes three Olympians:

J.R. Celski, who won two bronze medals at the 2010 Vancouver Olympics and a silver medal at the 2014 Sochi Olympics

Katherine Reutter-Adamek, who won silver and bronze at the 2010 Vancouver Olympics

Jessica Kooreman, 2014 Olympian
Other notable skaters are John-Henry Krueger, Thomas Hong and Keith Carroll Jr., who along with Celski set a new world record in the men's 5000m relay at the Shanghai World Cup in November.

To be eligible to compete at the Trials, all athletes must have been born before July 1, 2002.

The full list of skaters competing:

**Women**

Danielle Amos  
Maame Biney  
Lexi Burkholder  
Lana Gehring  
Kimi Goetz  
Gabriella Hachem  
Elizabeth Johnson  
Jessica Kooreman  
Julie Letai  
Katy Ralston  
Katherine Reutter-Adamek  
Kristen Santos  
April Shin  
Corrine Stoddard  
Taylor Wentz  
Jerebelle Yutangco

**Men**

Adam Callister  
Keith Carroll Jr.  
J.R. Celski  
Aaron Heo  
Thomas Hong  
Brandon Kim  
John-Henry Krueger  
Shaner LeBauer  
Luca Lim  
Casey Mullarkey  
Benjamin Oh
How many skaters will make the U.S. Olympic short track team?
Eight—five men and three women.

The U.S. short track team earned these eight quota places based on results from the fall World Cup competitions. The U.S. men earned the maximum number of quota places, five, when they qualified a relay team to the PyeongChang Olympics. The U.S. women fell short of earning a place in the Olympic relay event, and as a result earned three individual places.

Number of U.S. athletes in each distance at the 2018 Olympics:

- **500m**: 3 men and 2 women
- **1000m**: 2 men and 2 women
- **1500m**: 3 men and 3 women
- **Relay**: 1 team (4 men)
- **Total**: 5 men and 3 women

How will the skaters qualify for the U.S. Olympic short track team?

Athletes will lock up their spots on the Olympic team by earning "Final Points" based on their placement in each race. On each day of competition, the skaters will go through that day's distance's preliminary round, quarter and/or semifinals and final stages twice, earning Final Points for their ranking in each race.

For example, the first-place finisher receives 1000 points, the second-place finisher receives 800 points and the third-place finisher receives 640 points. If a skater finishes first in both the first and second 500m races, she'll receive 2000 points in that distance.

How Final Points are used to select the Olympic team
In the women's races, the skaters with the most Final Points in each distance will earn the U.S.' three spots for women on the Olympic short track team. If quota spots remain unfilled, then the skaters with the second-most Final Points in each distance will earn a spot on the team.

For example, if Jessica Kooreman earns the most Final Points in both the 500m and 1000m races and Katherine Reutter-Adamek earns the most Final Points in the 1500m races, only two of the three quota spots will have been filled. If the skaters with the second-most Final Points in each race were Maame Biney in the 500m, Reutter-Adamek in the 1000m and Kooreman in the 1500m, then those three women will qualify for the 2018 U.S. Olympic team.

But if Kooreman and Reutter-Adamek combine to have both the most and the second-most Final Points in all three distances, then the skater with the most third-most Final Points in the 1500m, the only race where the U.S. earned three starting positions, will join them on the team.

Tiebreaker rules are in place if the quota spots are exceeded and can be found in U.S. Speedskating's full athlete selection procedures here.

The qualifying procedures are slightly simpler for the U.S. men's team, since they earned the maximum five Olympic spots. Again, the skaters with the most Final Points in each distance will make the Olympic team, and the skaters with the second-most Final Points in each distance will join them. If that adds up to more than six skaters, then only two of the three skaters with the second-most Final Points in each distance will qualify, based on overall Final Points.

If that adds up to less than five skaters, then the next ranked skater or skaters will qualify based on overall Final Points. The leaders of U.S. Speedskating will decide at the Olympic Games which four of the five skaters on the U.S. men's team will compete in each round of the relay.
Legend has it that U.S. short track speedskater Thomas Hong was born in an ice rink.

Not quite.

Hong, who helped Team USA set a world record in the men’s 5,000-meter relay at a world cup event last month in Shanghai, was born in a South Korean hospital, but his mom’s water did break when she was at a speedskating rink in Seoul while watching his then-6-year-old sister Stephanie learn the sport.

The Hong family, originally from South Korea, moved to the Baltimore area when Thomas was 4, and a year later, he set blade to ice. The rest of the story continues to be written in success.

Now 20, Hong hopes to return to South Korea for his most important races ever: as a member of Team USA for the Olympic Winter Games PyeongChang 2018 in February.

“First and foremost, I think it would be a huge honor to represent the United States at the highest level of sport, the Olympic Games,” Hong said from South Korea while preparing for the final world cup of the season, where he helped the U.S. earn a bronze in the relay.

“The fact that these Games will be in South Korea, where I was born, it’s a whole extra thing to be proud of, to be in the country where I was born and have my family be able to watch me; not just my immediate family, but my extended family. It would be a huge honor.”

Hong grew up in Maryland with his sister, mom Hang Jung Hong and grandmother Okja Moon. His father, DooPyeo Hong, returned to South Korea for better employment opportunities while the rest of the family remained in the United States.
“We were fortunate enough to travel back and forth to Korea, so it wasn’t weird,” Thomas said.

Hong’s ties to his birth country have remained strong over the years. He returned to South Korea in the summers and trained there, as well as at home in Maryland with the Potomac Speedskating Club at the Wheaton Ice Arena.

During one of those summers he trained at the Goyang-si Rink, where he and U.S. his teammates showed up prior to the Seoul World Cup to share the sport with intellectually impaired South Koreans as part of the United States Olympic Committee’s “Thank You, PyeongChang,” goodwill campaign.

And last year, he took part in a world cup that served as a test event at the Gangneung Ice Arena, where the Olympic Winter Games will be staged.

“It was very thrilling,” Hong remembered. “Individually I did all right, but it was actually my first world cup medal with the men’s 5,000 relay. We got bronze, and it was a thrilling experience. The South Korean people knew it was the Olympic facility, and it was a great place to skate off the energy the crowd gave out.”

Hong drew attention as a short track speedskater almost from the get-go. He represented Team USA at the Winter Youth Olympic Games Innsbruck 2012, and one year later competed at the 2012-13 world junior championships.

“The Youth Olympic Games was my first international competition,” Hong said. “When we are at world cups, we are amongst the same people from our sport all the time, but at the Youth Olympic Games, there are so many athletes from different sports. It was really interesting to meet new people from different sports. Although we didn’t compete in the same discipline, we had a ton of mutual respect for each other.”

In 2014, he was the youngest competitor at the U.S. Olympic Team Trials, while in 2016-17 he won a silver medal in the 500-meter and a bronze medal in the 3,000-meter relay at the world junior
championships, in addition to helping the senior men’s 5,000-meter relay to that world cup bronze medal at the Olympic test event. This season he has already helped set the relay world record in Shanghai, and then he wrapped up the world cup season with another 5K relay bronze medal in South Korea.

Hong is now on target for the 2018 U.S. Olympic Team Trials, which take place Dec. 15-17 at the Utah Olympic Oval in Kearns, Utah. The men’s 5,000-meter relay team has already qualified an Olympic spot. Should Hong skate on it in PyeongChang 2018, there will be plenty of eyes on him.

“My dad is there,” Hong said. “I have three sets of aunt and uncles there, and four cousins. A lot of my cousins were educated abroad, so I would see them every other year.”

He is hopeful for the chance to represent the country where he grew up, in the country where he was born, on the biggest athletic stage in the world.

And he’ll definitely be a crowd favorite.

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Kristen Santos wasn’t sure if she even wanted to go.

Her first attempt at speedskating in the United States Nationals a year earlier, by her own admission, hadn’t gone very well and now, there was another U.S. National meet coming up in Madison, Wisconsin, a far cry from Fairfield, Connecticut, where Kristen was living.

Santos - just 10 years old -- hemmed and hawed and finally, decided to go give the Nationals another go. So, the family packed the car and made the 15-plus hour trip to see if this speedskating thing was something serious or just a passing fancy.

Turns out, it was serious. She won.

“That still has to be my best (speedskating) moment, that first year I won nationals,” Santos said in phone interview from Salt Lake City, Utah, where she’s training to compete in the upcoming World Cup race in Budapest, Hungary. “It was just my second nationals and I was the youngest of the age group (Midget Division) that I was in. At the last minute, we decided to go and I ended up winning it.

“That was a big boost for me and great thing to look back on because usually, before big races I would get nervous and anxious and put pressure in myself but before these races, I had no pressure in myself. In my mind, I was just there for fun. No expectations. I wasn’t going to make an ‘A’ final. But I did and that showed me that the best way to race was to relax and not overthink everything too much.”

Now, 12 years later, the 22-year old Santos is preparing for some of the biggest races of her life. A member of the 2016-17 United States Short Track Speedskating team, Santos will soon be headed to Hungary for a World Cup event before going to the Netherlands for a second World Cup race in early October. After that, there are November races in Shanghai, China and Seoul, South Korea, before heading back to Salt Lake City for the U.S. Olympic Trials.
“The Olympic trials are the weekend of December 16,” Santos said. “It’s three days … the same set up and the World Cup races. It’ll be at least three rounds at every distance. I’m in a good spot heading into these Olympic trials and hopefully I can go out and do the same thing (qualify). It would be a dream come true. This is what I’ve basically been working on my entire life. Literally, it’s just been a dream.”

When Santos first put on the skates at three years old at the Wonderland of Ice, they were figure skates, not speed skating skates. And it didn’t take Santos long to figure out that her favorite thing about skating was going fast.

“I don’t think I ever really had too much of a problem with the speed part, I mean, I don’t even remember learning how to skate correctly, it’s just something that I’ve always been able to do,” she said. “It took a little bit to get used to speed skating but being able to actually skate was something that I’ve always been able to do.”

Now, there aren’t exactly a lot of rinks that cater to the speedskating crowd but Santos found time at Ingalls Rink in New Haven, the Rinks at Shelton and at Trinity College. There was also a rink in New York where she would train, usually against men in their 40’s and 50’s

“I was thinking that my mom was going to hate this and never let me go again,” Santos said. “She was shocked when I got out there and I kept shouting, ‘I want to come back next week,’ I was so excited. I got hooked on it.”

She was nine.

Santos attended Warde High School, graduating in 2012. There, she played soccer and did track and field “just for fun” she said, competing in the pole vault. But upon graduation, it was time for a decision. Do I dive head first into all-out training for speedskating or don’t I?

“Either you’re in or you’re out,” she said.

She was in.
Good decision.

“Kristen has improved with how hard she trains as well as having a better understanding of what she’s doing,” said National Team coach Anthony Barthell via email. “She’s watching videos and asking questions about technique and race tactics. She’s becoming a student of her craft as well as being a teacher. Also, her will to win and not just be a part of the race is amazing to witness.”

“When I decided to change from trying to balance everything in my life to putting speedskating ahead of everything else, I feel like I’ve made a big jump in the last three years,” added Santos. “It’s literally all about the skating. I’ve put so much more now mentally into it. It’s all worth it.”

That was five years ago. Training full-time in Salt Lake, Santos has seen her times and her finishes improve by leaps and bounds. In a 500-meter World Cup event in 2014-15, her ranking was 76th. In that same distance in a 2016-17 World Cup race, her ranking was 7th. In addition, her ranking in the 3,000-meter relay was 14th a year ago. Today, its 5th. She is a two-time junior national champion, a World University Games member, a two-time Short Track Fall World Cup Team member, a Short Track Winter World Cup Team member and a two-time member of the Short Track National Team.

“Her strengths are how much she leans around a corner and how well she can follow,” Barthell said. “If you put someone in front of her to chase, she will do everything within herself to stay on that person, no matter how fast they’re going. She isn’t afraid to take a corner at high speeds, she’ll just lean and skate the corner.”

“In short track, you basically race every distance,” Santos said. “Time doesn’t really matter, your placement does. (Each competitor races a specific distance twice and it’s all about placement and points that you accumulate). I raced in the 500, the 1,000, and 1,500 (meters) and we had to skate like, eight races a day. It was a lot of racing.”

“I’m not 100 percent sure which event is her best,” Barthell said. “I’d say the 1,000 meters … it’s set up for her to follow at higher speeds
early on so she can relax in the race and save her energy for the final sprint.”

At 22, Santos knows she still has a lot of time to reach that dream of making the Olympic team, if not this year, then four years from now.

“I’m pretty sure I would go another four years if I didn’t make it,” she said. “I had a long talk with my mom about this … she knows that anything can happen at an Olympic trial, it’s such an unforgiving sport at times. Missing the Olympics doesn’t mean that I’ve failed at the sport. My mom was like, even if you don’t make it, you’ve been to World Cups, you’ve traveled the world. You’ve accomplished so much.”

But why stop there.

“She’s making all of the necessary adjustments to improve in every distance,” Barthell said. “And she will truly be good at every distance in the near future.”
How influential were your parents in your athletic career and in what ways?

My father used to take my siblings and me to a roller rink on the weekends. It was a simple place where a parent could keep an eye on five children while also allowing them the freedom to roam as they please. He ended up getting a part-time job there just to save money taking us.

I became a rink rat, and at 5 years old I saw the speed team practicing and I said to my dad, "I want to do that." From that moment he did everything he could to support me skating. We didn't have money. We gave up a lot, sacrificed more than we should have, and probably made irresponsible decisions, but he did it to support my dream.

Do you have another full-time job or business? How do you balance work and training?

I am a Senior Team Leader at a Target store in Salt Lake City. I've worked for Target since 2009 and I've had to support myself throughout my entire journey. I work 40 hours every week, 5 nights a week. Depending on the time of year and my exact position, over the years I've managed anywhere from 40 to 10 employees. I train all morning and then I go home and work all night long. I get home after midnight, in bed by 1:30 a.m. and I am up at 7 a.m. Monday through Saturday for training.

I sometimes have to miss workouts because I have to go to work, but for the most part I just do all of the workouts consecutively with minimal or no rest or break in between in order to get them done. Without working a full-time job I could not afford to skate, nor could I afford to live, so balancing it, although not ideal, is something I've accepted as a part of me.
I'm the only national team member to work a full 40-hour job. During the holiday season (Q4) my racing season is under way and my work life picks up quite a bit. Our store hours extend another hour. Last season in a two-week stretch I worked 100 hours ending on a Friday at 1 a.m. I went home, woke up at 6 a.m. and got on a fight to Asia to compete in World Cup's 3 and 4. I know times like that keep me from competing at my best. I know if I weren't working I could achieve better results. But that isn't my life, I work to support myself and at the end of the day I don't have any regrets. Plus, it's motivating to see how many people tell me it's not possible.

**Do you have any pets?**

I have two dogs. The first is Splinter, a Chihuahua/schnauzer mix. He looks like Master Splinter from the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. That is how he got his name. He is technically my dog.

The second is Charlie, a bichon frise. He is technically my girlfriend's dog. We live together with both dogs. They are both 6 years old. My dogs are awesome. It's funny because they are the opposite of my girlfriend and I. Splinter is more like her, and Charlie is more like me. But they are great. When things are really going rough for me, coming home dead tired from training and then sleep deprived from work they are right there waiting to do whatever I'm capable of. Sitting down, laying down, taking naps, they just want to be along for the ride and that's a really good feeling to have.

**In your hometown of West Chester, Penn., what are your five favorite spots to relax, eat out, etc.?**

I'm from rural Pennsylvania so I have a few chains out east and a few local places.

#1 Jerry's Pizza Pie in Honey Brook, Pennsylvania. My favorite thing is the cheesesteak stromboli. And yes, it's as good as it sounds.

#2 Rita's Italian Ice -- Shaved/water ice at its finest.
#3 Wawa -- Think Subway meets gas station. Except their hoagies are delicious. And during the holiday season they make the Gobbler hoagie which is about as awesome as it sounds.

#4 Turkey Hill -- This is all about the tea!

#5 Shady Maple -- Brunch done right!

**How much time do you spend training each day?**

4-8 hours a day. It varies depending on the day of the week and the time of the year. Early/summer training is longer days. Competition season the days get a little shorter.

**What's your typical training day/schedule?**

I wake up at 7:11 a.m., because that extra minute adds up over the course of a season. I get out of bed, drink a glass of water and have breakfast. Depending on my current state of sleepiness it might be fresh fruit with yogurt. It could be granola cereal, it could be a Froozer Smoothie, or just a Usana Nutrimeal shake.

From there I'm off to the Utah Olympic Oval and arrive at 8 a.m. I run/stretch/warm-up for 45 minutes and then get on the ice. We spend two hours on the ice. Afterward we'll spend about an hour training off the ice but with skating specific workouts/imitations. From there I'll head into the weight room right away and knock out an hour to an hour and a half weight session. I'll leave the oval and get home with about 15 minutes time to eat/shower and leave for work. I'll get to work at 2 p.m. and leave around midnight, get home and asleep by 1 to 1:30 a.m.

**How do you work to achieve your daily goals?**

I keep a positive attitude. A few years ago I made a conscious effort to wake up every day with a fresh outlook. I know it sounds cliché, but it can actually make a huge difference. It would be easy for me to dwell on how much I worked the day before or how tired I am from not being able to cool down or utilize proper recovery techniques but
it wouldn't get me anywhere. So I start over each day even if I have to consciously tell myself to do so.

**What is your favorite workout or fitness trend?**

I love getting on the road bike for a really hard climb. When you're climbing you only have one option and that is to keep pushing. If you stop or just prolong the pain, you fall down.

**What's the most grueling work out you've ever done?**

That's a tough question to answer. I could probably give a hundred different answers. I remember once doing a pyramid work-out on the ice. It consisted of starting at a certain number of laps for a set, after the set you get 60-90 seconds rest before your next set, which is 1 lap longer than the previous. You add a lap each set with your rest staying the same. Once you get to a certain number of laps in a set you head back down, taking 1 lap off each set. Except this time we went up, back down, up, and back down. But it was before I was a World Cup athlete and most of our team was off competing internationally, so it effectively came down to a complete work-out with myself and 1 other team mate. Afterwards our coach said he didn't expect us to make it half way.

**What would people be surprised to learn about training for the Olympics?**

That we train all four years!!!! No but seriously, we grind out session after session but we are just regular people. We just work out a lot more.

**Is there anything you do for training that's out of the ordinary or experimental?**

Nothing too bizarre. At least not to us. But to a normal person some of it may seem a little wacky. We'll take a balancing ball or disc, and then use one of our turn bands to replicate the position/lean/body angle we would have on the ice. Except we do it while balancing on one leg on the balancing disc. I'm sure if you saw someone doing that at a gym you would take a picture.
What's your nutrition plan?

My nutrition has been my Achilles heel. Because of my training combined with my work schedule it makes eating healthy more difficult than I would like at times. I have two nights off a week that I have to cook lunch and dinner for the rest of the week in order to have enough food.

If you are to indulge, what's your go-to snack?

Chick-fil-A. It's my weakness, it's so good! Chick-fil-A sandwich with cheese and a sweet tea!

What is your earliest memory of doing or seeing skating?

Well, I was a transition athlete so my start is a little different. I was an inline speed skater to came over to ice after seeing a fair amount of success. If we just count them both as speed skating then my earliest memory is when I was about 5. I was used to skating at the roller rink all the time and I saw the speed team and told my dad I wanted to do that. One of the parents of a skater brought an old pair of skates for me to try a few weeks later, and they were probably 3 sizes too big. I told my dad they were fine because I wanted to skate. I had to have looked like I had clown feet.

What's your earliest or favorite memory of watching the Olympics?

I remember watching the 2004 Athens Summer Games. My brother and I watched a lot of track and a lot of swimming. We even had an Olympics video game. I remember saying, one day I'm going to go to the Olympics and win gold, and he would say, yeah and I'm going to go too and win the silver. 2006 would be my earliest memory of the winter games. At that point I was a older and some of the inline greats were having enormous success on the ice (Chad Hedrick).

Was there a specific "breakthrough" moment/competition when you finally realized you could compete in your sport at a high enough level to reach the Olympics?
I don't know if that one moment really exists for me. I told myself since I was a teenager, probably 14 years old, that I would go to the Olympics for speed skating. I wasn't that good yet, but every year I made huge leaps. I think I told myself that so much it stopped feeling like a dream and more like just the next step. Once I came over to ice I didn't know I would actually be good enough right away. But I set strong goals for myself and I improved early on at an accelerated rate. In under two years on the ice I knew I could get there physically.

**What's something cool, weird intense about your sport that people don't normally see? What's the hardest part of your sport?**

Everything! The sport in general, you have someone training hours every day in a completely unnatural body position that is hunched over and muscularly is asymmetrical, then they put two knives on their feet and go over 30 miles per hour just inches off the ground.

**Who is your coach? How long have you been working together and what's your relationship like?**

My coaches are Anthony Barthell and Alex Izykowski. They were my coaches shortly after I started ice and then again in 2016 to present. I think we have a good relationship. They both understand the uniqueness of my circumstances with work and the technical pitfalls of my skating style.

**Who do you socialize with most within your sport or any sport?**

Probably Kimi Goetz. She's my girlfriend's sister, and since we've been dating for over 10 years she's basically my sister.

**What's the best piece of advice you've ever received?**

My longtime inline coach was chockful of great advice. I could probably answer this question with a different piece of advice every day of the week. But as a child I had quite a temper. So I would get angry or upset and put on a show. I remember when I started getting pretty good my coach told me I needed to act like a champion. That anyone could win a race but that doesn't make them a champion. A
champion carries themselves a certain way, acts a certain way in victory and defeat alike.

What's a big obstacle that you've overcome in your life?

There are a few I guess. The big one I guess is just money. Even as a kid my family never had money. I remember one year, I was probably 17 years old. I had already competed in world championships, I had won nationals and broken records, but I had no money. I remember taking coins to a collection machine just to try and get enough money to pay the entry fee for my brother and me to compete in our national qualifier.

There was a winter after my parents split up that my mother fell back into bad habits with alcohol and drugs. It was the middle of a Pennsylvania winter and our heat was shut off. It was like 38 or 40 degrees in the house. I get asked a lot how I can work as much as I do and still skate. The first few times I was asked that question it caught me off guard. Eventually I settled on, if it's all that you know, or if it's the only way to keep going, naturally you will always find a way.

Within your sport, who has been your greatest influence and why?

Probably one of my former coaches, Jae Su Chun. I was still transitioning from inline to ice and trying to find out who I was as a short track speed skater. He saw something no one else did, he helped me and turned me into a real short tracker.

What advice would you give to a young child just starting out in short track?

Going fast and looking cool are both really fun. But if you don't focus on skating the right way you'll get left behind.

Who is your most interesting teammate?
Aaron Tran! There isn't anything un-interesting about him. His jokes, his completely off-topic remarks, his attitude, he's just a big kid doing what he loves.

**Are you a fan of any other sports?**

I'm a Philly fan! Eagles/Sixers/Philles. Right now I'm a big Joel Embiid fan. He just seems like a cool guy with a good sense of humor.

**Do you play any other sports?**

I competed in inline speed skating for years, going to 5 straight world championships and 1 Pan American Games.

**Who was the most influential in helping you achieve your dreams?**

That's tough to name just one person. I guess my Dad. At the end of the day he worked incredibly long hours every day growing up, sacrificed pretty much any personal satisfaction and vacation, and all he wanted in return is full effort. We've had tense times and fights but at the end of the day I get it. And, I like to think he's one of the reasons I have the work ethic that I do. He busted his butt to give me a chance as a kid. I bust my own just so I can continue with that chance.

**Did anyone ever tell you that you wouldn't be able to succeed in your sport? How were you able to overcome that?**

Growing up I was always told by someone I couldn't do it. But I always nodded my head, stored it in the back of my mind and went to work. I was too small, or too slow, or too weak, then I was a fluke, couldn't do it again, didn't deserve it, etc. I loved being the underdog. When I was younger I use to convince myself that all of my competitors were training together to beat me. When I was tired or sluggish or didn't want to train, I would tell myself they're training somewhere right now to beat you. Then when I went out training really early, or really late, or for the third or fourth time in a day, I use to tell myself this is the one that counts. Here is where you can make up some ground.
If you were not an athlete, what would you be doing?

I would love to be a sports radio host.

When you have time off, what would constitute a perfect day for you?

A perfect day for me is simple, my girlfriend and I are both off from work. We take the dogs for a walk and enjoy our time together. It doesn't happen very often so when it does just the company is great for me. Sometimes we'll take the dogs to a park or something.

How do you unwind after a competition?

I normally don't, haha. I dissect everything. Look at every potential mistake big or small and how I can fix it to not let it happen again. I watch the videos over, and over, and over again.

What are some of your hobbies?

Usually in my free time I just spend it with my dogs, either taking them to the park or just on walks. I also ride my motorcycle for fun, usually just to work and practice because of my schedule but occasionally I'll be able to take it up into the canyons.

What is your music of choice while training? What's on your workout playlist?

If the song is good, I can listen to pretty much anything. Five songs that are on one of my training playlists are:

1. Eminem – Legacy
2. Nas - The Message
3. Ice Cube - Steady Mobbin
4. Dr. Dre - The Watcher
5. Lloyd Banks - Warrior Pt. 2
Have you been to South Korea before? What are you most looking forward to about the Games being hosted in South Korea? Anything you want to see or do?

I've been to South Korea four or five times now. Short track is a huge deal there so I'm looking forward to the atmosphere and for the sport to be in the limelight in the host country.

Do you like kimchi or any other Korean foods?

I like bulgogi and kalbi beef!

What will success look like for you in PyeongChang? What are your goals?

I want great execution for myself. Too many times I've finished a race and felt like if I had just executed a little bit better I would have achieved a lot more. I think the physical skill will be there, I just need to nail the execution of my races. That in I want to do everything in my power to help make sure we come home with a medal in the relay event. We have a superbly talented team and just need to put it all together and we can make it happen.

Will you head home for the holidays prior to the Games? What do you most look forward to? If not, where will you celebrate and with whom?

With Olympic Trials being a week before the holidays and some of my family coming to watch, I will not travel home for the holidays. I'll spend it with my dogs, my girlfriend, and probably her sister and my teammate, Kimi Goetz. My dad, brother, sister, her husband, and two children are coming to watch my Olympic Trials so I'll still experience the holidays with my family.

What's on your Christmas or holiday list this year?

I think with our Olympic Trials being so close to the holidays, just having that satisfaction to be able to say you're an Olympian would be the best. Knowing you are about to travel and compete for the most elusive podium in sport.
Olympic star mentors students who wonder how he got up from ghastly crash
Concord: Speed skater J.R. Celski stars in Classroom Champions program with Concord students


The face on the screen was familiar to the students from Concord’s Oak Grove Middle School. They had viewed the videos he had sent them earlier in the school year. They were familiar with his story — a dashing speed skater, so talented, so young. And then the horrible injury in which he crashed during a short-track race, his right skate slicing his left thigh to the bone.

The students filed into the school’s media room. This time, J.R. Celski, Olympic medalist, was interacting with them via video from Salt Lake City.

“I’m sitting in the speed skating oval. Want to see?” he asked, turning his laptop around and pointing the camera at the rink. “Pretty cool, right?” The students’ oohs and ahhs confirmed Celski’s presumption.

The video chat was courtesy of Classroom Champions, a nonprofit conceived in 2009 by Olympic gold medalist bobsledder Steve Mesler. Pairing Olympians and Paralympians with classrooms on a year-long mentorship program, Classroom Champions stresses goal-setting, education and perseverance.

Pretty cool, right? Take yourself back to those awkward middle school years. Would a video mentorship offered by Eric Heiden, or Matt Biondi, or Jonny Moseley, or Mary Lou Retton, or Katie Ledecky have been of interest to you?

In Celski, the Oak Grove students have been handed a gem, personable and relatable. They couldn’t wait to get to the questions. A sampler:
Q: “Would you like to have a book about yourself?” A: “Yes I would, of course,” Celski said. “But I’m going to give it a little time. I’m only 27. I started speed skating when I was your guys’ age.”
Q: “What’s your favorite video game?” A: “It was Halo, but then as I got older my favorite was Call of Duty.”

He was asked whether he had any siblings; whether he would ever want to be a coach; whether speed skating was something he could retire from; whether racing was stressful; whether he missed home (Celski, born in Fort Ord, lives in Federal Way, Washington); whether he was concerned that someone would bomb the upcoming Olympics at South Korea.

Most of the serious questions were regarding Celski’s injury. It happened at the U.S. Olympic trials five months before the 2010 Winter Games. It took 60 stitches to close the wound.

“I had never experienced anything like it,” Celski said. “I had a moment on the ice when I thought I’d never get up.” He later told one of his doctors he was “glad it happened to me” because he learned about himself.

P.S.: He won five medals in the subsequent Olympics. The mentoring medalist.

“You realize that it’s not earning a medal that’s the cool part,” he told the students. “It’s the hours you put in, that are representative of all that goes into (winning).” And then, just that quickly, whimsy came calling.

“Have you ever seen a zamboni before?” Celski asked, whipping his laptop around to show the students two big, boxy machines that resurface the ice.

Even after Celski signed off, there seemed to be a buzz in the room. “It’s kind of hard to explain,” said sixth-grader David Aria, 11, “but someone that you see from the Internet, you see them talking to you. It’s like, out of any other people, (he) chose us.”

“It felt nice talking to someone who has already accomplished things that are very important to a sport,” said Daniel Patarroyal, 11. “And
the fact he had a very bad injury and was able to start like nothing happened is very inspiring.”

Teacher Lisa Brown was struck by the way Celski’s interaction with the students validated what they had talked about in class.

“We discussed in the classroom how people who are famous start out as common people just as we are,” she said. “That can be you also, one day, on the screen.”
Short Track Season In Review

The future looks bright for US Speedskating’s short track team, with individual performers, relay squads and up-and-comers all showing improved times and results during the 2016-17 season.

“We’re trying to rebuild,” said Guy Thibault, high performance director at US Speedskating. “This (pre-Olympic) season, we only had two athletes on the team that were in Sochi — the others were newcomers. Everyone is getting more and more experience, and you can never get enough experience in short track.”

Here are a few of the most encouraging events:

Celski Re-Emerges as the Top U.S. Performer
After two injury-plagued seasons, three-time Olympic medalist J.R. Celski (Federal Way, Wash.) showed significant signs of finding his best form, right on time for the PyeongChang 2018 Olympic Winter Games.

The 26-year-old skater, who recovered from a torn hip labrum during the 2014-15 season only to injure his right MCL (knee) in a crash at the national championships last year, claimed a bronze medal in the 1000m at the ISU World Cup in February in Dresden, Germany. It was his first individual World Cup medal in more than three years.

“It feels good to be back in the mix,” Celski said after the race. “Overall, I’m really happy with the way the day went. I remain confident that the work we are putting in as a team is pushing us in the right direction and that the results will continue to improve.”

Celski now holds 23 World Cup medals, with 15 coming in individual races.

Thibault counts an in-form Celski and John-Henry Krueger (Pittsburgh, Pa.) as the biggest U.S. threats for an individual short track medal in PyeongChang.
“I think we will get one or two medals, and I count (Celski), and possibly (Krueger), as absolutely capable,” Thibault said. “Those two guys could be on the Olympic podium. Short track is more unpredictable than long track, but I do expect one or two medals.”

No World Medal, but Improved Relay Times
For the third straight season, U.S. skaters fell short of bringing home a medal from the World Short Track Speed Skating Championships, which were held in March in Rotterdam, Netherlands. Still, Thibault was encouraged by some of the results, including Celski’s 13th-place finish in the men’s overall classification and Jessica Kooreman’s (Melvindale, Mich.) 16th-place finish in the women’s overall classification.

In addition, Celski - a member of the silver-medal winning U.S. men’s relay at the Sochi Games - plus Krueger, Keith Carroll Jr. (Honey Brook, Pa.) and Thomas Hong (Laurel, Md.) placed seventh in the 5000m relay. Aaron Tran (Federal Way, Wash.) contributed in an earlier heat.

“I saw huge signs. We’ve worked a lot on speed,” Thibault said. “Our guys really pushed themselves and it was a huge progression. Is it strong enough? No, not yet, but it’s getting there.”

Meanwhile, the women’s 3000m relay team, with Kooreman, Katherine Reutter (Champaign, Ill.), Kristen Santos (Fairfield, Conn.) and Kimi Goetz (Flemington, N.J.), set a new U.S. standard at the World Cup in early November in Calgary, Alberta.

The Return of Reutter
Reutter, a two-time 2010 Olympic medalist and 2011 world champion, returned to competition this season after accumulated injuries caused her to retire in 2013 at age 24. She won the 1500m title at the U.S. Speedskating Short Track Championships in January and qualified for her first world championships since 2011, but a concussion forced her to withdraw.

“I made the Winter World Cup Team, earned a individual spot on World Championship Team, and qualified for the 2017-2018 U.S.
National Short Track Team — I’m so grateful for 2nd chances!” Reutter posted on social media.

Krueger Finishes Strong in World Cup Standings
Krueger, the 22-year-old skater, who finished fourth overall in the 1500m World Cup standings, won the first individual U.S. World Cup medal in nearly two years when he claimed 1500m bronze in Salt Lake City, breaking the United States’ longest drought in the two-decade history of the World Cup. It was his fifth individual World Cup medal since the Sochi Games.

“Everyone has made big improvements from last year and have really raised the bar for difficulty in the races, but that’s what makes us stronger and helps us prepare,” Krueger said after the short track world cup qualifier. “The sport is constantly changing when it comes to power, strength and racing ability. I want to adapt real quick and then prepare for PyeongChang.”

Strong World Junior Results
The future looks bright, with Team USA claiming three medals at the World Junior Short Track Speed Skating Championships, held in late January in Innsbruck, Austria.

Maame Biney (Reston, Va.) won bronze in the women’s 500m, the first women’s world junior medal since 1996. Hong took silver in the men’s 500m, the first men’s individual medal since Krueger’s in 2012. Finally, the men’s 3000m relay team took bronze, the first relay medal since 2012.

“(Biney) is our first women’s world junior medalist in a while,” Thibault said. “She’s still in high school; people need to watch for her. And (Hong) surpassed a junior world record. Next year, they will be older and more mature, and I expect a lot from them, and a few other juniors. . . They’re not in the medal conversation for (PyeongChang), but they could be for Beijing in 2022.”

Lynn Rutherford is a sportswriter based out of New York. She is a freelance contributor to US Speedskating on behalf of Red Line Editorial, Inc.
KEARNS, Utah – US Speedskating announced today the 23 athletes that will be part of the 2017-18 National Training Program (NTP) for the Olympic season. This year’s group features seven Olympians and 21 athletes who are returning from previous year’s NTP programs. The National Training Program is an elite group of female and male athletes who are selected based on their athletic performance during the 2016-17 season and will be aiming to represent Team USA at the Olympic Winter Games PyeongChang.

“We’re entering the Olympic season with a diverse pool of veteran and youthful talent,” said Guy Thibault, US Speedskating high performance director. “I’m looking forward to an excellent showing from our athletes throughout the season heading into Olympic Trials and in PyeongChang.”

The complete Short Track and Long Track NTP roster (in alphabetical order) is listed below online:

SHORT TRACK (10)  Maame Biney* – Reston, VA  Adam Callister – Salt Lake City, UT  Keith Carroll Jr. – Honey Brook, PA  J.R. Celski – Federal Way, WA  Kimi Goetz – Flemington, NJ  Gabriella Hachem* – North Potomac, MD  Thomas Hong - Laurel, MD  Casey Mullarkey – Cleveland, OH  Kristen Santos – Fairfield, CT  Aaron Tran – Federal Way, WA


* denotes first-year NTP member
During the 2016-17 speed skating season, U.S. athletes collected 32 international medals, including five World Championship Medals. In addition, of the 23 athletes on this year’s roster, 16 of them were named to a Senior or Junior World Championship team last season. The Olympic skating season kicks off in Kearns, Utah at the Utah Olympic Oval on August 19-20 with the men and women’s Short Track World Cup Team Qualifier. The Long Track World Cup Team Qualifier will also be at the Utah Olympic Oval on Oct. 11-15.
Who Would Team USA Athletes Give An Olympic Medal To If Given The Chance?


14. Kimi Goetz, Short Track Speedskating

If I could give a medal to someone, I would give it to my sister, Sam, for pushing me to try ice, for supporting me at every competition and always being there for me.

She got me to start inline skating because she joined and I pretty much copied everything that she did. She was two years older. She was 9 and I was 7. So, I joined inline solely because she did and I knew nothing about the sport. And then she moved to Salt Lake City in 2013 to live with her boyfriend Keith. I wanted to live near my sister, so I said I'd move out there and go to school, and she said, you need to try ice. So I did and she basically went with me to every practice for the first three months every day. Now I am skating for the USA NTP team.
The 2017-18 Olympic season began for US Speedskating with the Short Track Desert Classic at the Utah Olympic Oval from July 29-30. Over 70 skaters from seven different countries raced in the two-day event, separated into four different groupings – Open A Ladies, Open A Men, Combined B and Combined C.

Thomas Hong (Laurel, Md.) won the overall for the Open A Men’s Division, followed by three-time Olympic medalist J.R. Celski (Federal Way, Wash.) and 2016-17 World Cup team member Aaron Tran (Federal Way, Wash.).

“Today was exhilarating and incredibly fun,” said Hong. “I tried a lot of new things during this Desert Classic that I hope to replicate in other races this season.”

The 2016-17 Short Track World Junior Championships 500m silver medallist took the overall title by winning the 500m, placing second in the 1500m, third in the 1000m and third in the 1500m Superfinal.

“I want to be a presence on the World stage this season. I really want to represent my country on a big stage,” said Hong.

On the women’s side, Kristen Santos (Fairfield, Conn.) captured the overall title for the Ladies’ Open A Division. The 2016-17 World Cup team member swept the weekend’s events, finishing first in the 500m, 1000m, 1500m and 1500m Superfinal.

“It was really fun racing this weekend,” said Santos. “I think it is a great way to start an important season. I’ve been working on a lot of things mentally and physically and it was great to see them play out.”

Short Track National Training Program newcomer Maame Biney (Reston, Va.) finished third overall on the women’s side behind Japan’s Yuki Kikuchi. Biney used the Desert Classic to gain
confidence and calm her nerves going into the Short Track World Cup Qualifiers Aug. 18-20.

“(Coach) Anthony told me to be uncomfortable during this competition…it was a great learning experience for me and will help for World Cup Qualifiers and Olympic Trials,” said Biney. “I was calmer than I expected I would be which I think will really help my nerves for Qualifiers.

The 500m bronze medalist at the 2016-17 World Junior Championships finished second in the 1500m and 1500m Superfinal, and third in the 500m and 1000m races.

Dylan Woodbury (Park City, Utah) of the Park City Speed Skating Club won the Combined B Division, winning the 500m, placing second in the 1000m and 1500 Superfinal, and skating to a fourth-place finish in the 1500m.

Ishmael Molina-Zepeda (Salt Lake City, Utah) of the Oval Speed Skating Club took home the overall title for the Combined C Division, winning three of his four races – 333m, 777m and 1000m Superfinal.

To see the full results from the 2017 Desert Classic, click here. You can watch the second day of racing, here. The season will continue with the Short Track World Cup Qualifiers at the Utah Olympic Oval from Aug. 18-20.
What Do Team USA Athletes Do When They Get A Day Off?


3) Lexi Burkholder, Short Track Speedskating

“Most of my days off from training are not very lazy as I have to do laundry, cook, homework, etc. to prepare for the week ahead. It’s rare that I have a true lazy day. If I can swing it, I try to get outside for a hike or day trip to a Utah state park. Finally, if all of my lazy-day obligations are met and I have nothing to do, which is like once a year, I generally will avoid getting out of bed except to gather food and beverages.”

13) Aaron Tran, Short Track Speedskating

"I always take utmost advantage of my lazy days. I first make sure I have the tastiest snacks at my disposal. But not too tasty, or else I'll get yelled at by my coaches for weight gain. Then I have to communicate with the family. Family is fun. And anything urgent that needs attention will be taken care of. Because missing urgent stuff is bad. It feels bad too. Finally, I can complete my mission of becoming the most lazy human being on the planet for the rest of the day by playing video games on my PC that I built. This includes playing popular games like, League of Legends, Rocket League, CS:GO, etc. with my friends from my home state of Washington."
Emerging U.S. Speedskating Talent John-Henry Krueger Charting His Own Path


Kearns • John-Henry Krueger crossed the finish line victorious, both fists flung into the air, upon winning the sixth — and last — men’s 1,500-meter World Cup qualifying race in six hours. The 22-year-old who grew up outside Pittsburgh, Pa., is considered one of America’s top short-track speedskaters, so winning a 1,500-meter event in a weekend packed with U.S. World Cup team qualifiers isn’t much of a stunner.

What’s fascinating, however, is the path Krueger is on. It’s ever-winding, still-circling the globe.

The talented skater once called the Utah Olympic Oval in Kearns his home track, and technically, it still is. But Krueger has charted his own course toward perhaps more podiums, more World Cup medals, and perhaps an inaugural Olympic appearance at the upcoming Pyeongchang Games in South Korea in February.

“Moving around is just part of a normal day for me,” he said. Two years ago, Krueger left training on a full-time basis in the Salt Lake City suburb, home to U.S. Speedskating, to train in Seoul, South Korea. Already on an upward trajectory in the sport, Krueger sought out something different, more unique with the move. He found it, but once again, recently felt the need to seek guidance elsewhere. Instead of the bustling bright lights and vibrant culture of one of Asia’s largest cities, Krueger is now in what he describes as “cow country” in the Dutch town of Heerenveen, a noted hotbed for long-track speedskating. Less than a year out from what could be his Olympic debut, Krueger took a risk and packed his bags.

It was, he said, “the last thing I wanted to do.” In a conversation with his mom, he told her he’d rather try something new and fail miserably as opposed to staying where he was, and well, ending up at the same
result. Leaving Seoul wasn’t easy, Krueger said. But what the young American skater yearned for was more individuality and freedom in training.

With how popular short-track skating is in Korea, there simply wasn’t enough time for needed 1-on-1 time with coaches.

“What tends to happen is they give you a little bit of a cookie-cutter style type of training,” explained the 15-time World Cup medalist, “which isn’t terrible, but when you’re a skater at my level, you need a little bit more individuality.”

So one day earlier this year, Krueger got to talking with Kip Carpenter, now an assistant coach and blade technician with the Dutch short-track team. Carpenter was a one-time U.S. standout in both long- and short-track skating. He won a bronze medal in the 2002 Olympics in Salt Lake City. Carpenter spoke to Dutch coach Jeroen Otter about Krueger’s situation.

No matter the national team, Krueger said Otter wants to piece together the best training team possible to help Dutch skaters. So he waved goodbye to Seoul and relocated 80 miles north of Amsterdam. When the U.S. national team hosts events, Krueger’s decision to live and train abroad puts more of a physical burden on him than when he is operating out of the Salt Lake Valley.

“I spend more time on an airplane than I do at home,” he said.

To read the entire article from the Salt Lake Tribune, click here.
KEARNS, Utah (AP) Maame Biney seems like the typical teenager. She giggles with her friends, is making her way through the Harry Potter movies and wants to go to homecoming. But that’s where typical ends for the 17-year-old speedskating phenom.

Biney is on a path to be the next great U.S. short track speedskater with the Olympics six months way. The Junior World Championship bronze medalist was the America’s Cup winner at the U.S. Speedskating Short Track World Cup Qualifier this weekend against Olympians and skaters 10-plus years her senior. She won three of six finals over the three days.

Biney is intimidated, sure, but that hasn’t stopped her from chasing her dreams – literally.

"Before I came here in the month of June, I had a week worth of dreams about going to the Olympics," Biney said. "I woke up and was like, ´(Gasp), oh no, I’m not there!´

"But I’m so excited to go if I make it. And I really want to make it. … (It would be) mind-blowing."

The journey to this point has been a bit random. Biney moved to the United States from Ghana to be with her father at 5 years old. She was supposed to be coming for a short visit and cried her eyes out when she first arrived. Her father, Kweku, had to pull the car over three times after picking Maame up from the airport to settle her down. She wanted to go home. But a trip to the mall and J.C. Penney started to change her mind and soon afterward Maame was repeatedly asking to stay.

Kweku was living in Rockville, Maryland, and found a school and daycare and their new life began. One day they were driving down the
street in Reston, Virginia, and Kweku looked over and saw a sign that read "Learn To Skate This Fall." He asked Maame if she was interested and that's how it all started.

Ice skating isn’t exactly a popular endeavor in Ghana, so she didn’t know anything about the sport. She’d never seen a rink, but Kweku signed her up anyway.

"We weren’t looking for anything, we were just driving around,” Kweku said. "She didn’t even know what skating was. She didn’t even know what that word was and I explained it to her."

"Only thing cold in Ghana is cold beer.”

Maame ended up being a natural, and it didn’t take long before the coach suggested speedskating.

Twelve years later, Maame has moved to Salt Lake City to train in hopes of making the Olympic team, which begins short-track trials on Dec. 15. Kweku suggested taking the year off from high school, but she didn’t want to fall behind. Maame wanted to graduate with her friends, so the school arranged for her to take online classes to stay on track while she trains.

Those types of decisions are the hardest part for Maame, who misses out on many of the normal teenage trappings.

"I feel like that’s the worst part of skating 24/7, not being able to go to homecoming the last three years and not able to hang out with my friends whenever they want to do something,” Maame said through another bout of laughter. "It’s like, ‘Oh no, I can’t, I have practice.’ I like it, because I also have friends here. So it’s kind of like a win-win kind of situation, in a way.

"Not having a very good social life, I guess. I’m surrounded by speedskaters all the time and I’m not saying anything bad about them or anything, but we’re not the most mature people in the world. We are not. Even though I’m 17, I feel like I’m a 12-year-old. I am not ready to be 18 in four months.”
To read the full article, click here.
LITTLE ROCK, Ark.- The distance between South Korea and the west coast of the United States is about six thousand miles. That means when us athletes travel to Pyeong Chang for the Winter Olympics. They'll be traveling very far from their friends and families. Thomas Hong is a speed skater, a young one, as he just turned 20 in July.

"For me being young, not everyone knows exactly my capabilities and stuff like that. So there's definitely some underestimating there, I can sneak up on people," Hong said.

He almost did that a few years ago. Hong was the youngest competitor at the 2014 Olympic trials as he was just 17. He would go on to finish 11th overall.

Since then, he's won silver at the world junior championships. Hong is also a six-time national champion in his age group.

"Everyone's doing the same thing. What can you do to be better than your competitors? Learning who you are in the sport."

It's been an ongoing lesson since he was five years old, the age that Hong began skating. His family had just moved to the US from South Korea.

"And for some reason we knew somebody in the area and they happened to be doing short track speed skating. and it was just another way for us to get to know the community."

That was in Maryland. Hong has since moved to Utah to train full time. Now thinking full time about South Korea in February as his dad still lives there.
"Just having familiar eyes watching me. I think that'll definitely give me an extra spark."

Before going to South Korea, Hong first has to qualify for Team USA. The Olympic Trials for short track speed skating are in mid-December in Salt Lake City.
Who is Jessica Kooreman?

http://wavy.com/2017/10/03/who-is-jessica-kooreman/

Jessica Kooreman, who competed at the 2014 Sochi Olympics under her maiden name, Smith, dominated the world of inline skating before switching to short track in her early 20’s. Now 33 years old and a two-time world championship medalist, Kooreman will likely be the veteran member of a young team of the U.S. women’s short track squad competing in PyeongChang.

Speed skating beginnings

Kooreman started skating early thanks to her parents.

“My father Rick grew up racing on roller skates and enjoyed the sport,” Kooreman said. “My mom also skated in her early teens. She wishes she had started earlier, and so by the age of one she put me on skates and I haven’t looked back since.”

By two years old, Kooreman was already competing in roller skating races under her father’s coaching. Her mother encouraged her to pursue other activities, so Kooreman also participated in ballet classes, modeling and children’s beauty pageants. But after a few years, Kooreman’s mother told the six-year-old that she had to make a choice.

“I started getting floor burns on my knees,” Kooreman said. “And my mom was like, ‘You need to keep wearing your knee pads,’ and I was not wanting to wear knee pads. And she’s like, ‘Well, it’s knee pads or modeling. You have to choose.’ And I’m like, ‘I’m not wearing knee pads, so I guess I’m done modeling.’”

Kooreman earned sixteen inline skating world titles, and hoped that if she waited long enough the sport would be added to the Olympic program. But by 24 years old, she realized that switching sports might be her only path to the Olympics.

She tried long track skating first, but decided short track speed skating was more her style because she disliked long track skating’s
time trials. She switched full-time from inline to ice skating in 2008, made her first national team in 2009 and was chosen as an alternate for the U.S. Olympic short track team at the 2010 Vancouver Winter Games.

“Getting to the point of making this transition and realizing that I’m starting completely over at 24 years old… you know, that’s even harder to give everything up and to say, you know what, I’m gonna have to re-climb this ladder, and I’m older now, and is that possible?”

Jessica Kooreman on switching from inline to speed skating

Breakout moment

After getting a late start in the sport of short track, Kooreman didn’t make her first world championships podium until she was 28 years old. She helped the U.S. women win a silver medal in the 3000m relay at the 2012 World Short Track Speed Skating Championships.

Olympic experience

Two years later, Kooreman proved she was the U.S.’ top female short track skater when she won all three individual events at the 2014 U.S. Olympic Trials.

At the Sochi Winter Olympics, her best finish was fourth in the 1000m.

“Being fourth at the Olympics is interesting,” she said. “You know, it’s kinda sweet. I joke about it because on one hand, I’m very proud to be fourth at the Olympics. That’s something that I take to heart… And I have no regrets with how I raced. But then on the other hand, I joke about how I got copper, and they don’t give a medal for copper. Nobody gets a medal for fourth, and everyone remembers one through three. So it’s definitely something that’s motivated me to keep going, mainly because I felt like I accomplished fourth at the Olympics after not really being on short track as long as a lot of the others have.”

Major competitions
Kooreman won her second world championship medal a few months after the Sochi Games when she finished second in the 3000m (a distance which is raced at the Olympics) at the 2014 World Championships. She also competed at the 2015, 2016 and 2017 Worlds, but didn’t pick up any additional medals.

Signature

Kooreman can often be distinguished from the short track pack by her helmet, which features the head of a bald eagle over an American flag background.

Top quotes

“I actually tried long track [speed skating] for a little bit to give that a chance, and I just did not have fun doing it. I don’t like time trialing, and in my sport of short track, we compete, we race, we’re jostling for position. And I just enjoy being out there and competing against people and having the best strategy, and seeing how it might not be the fastest, but the smartest that wins. Or it might be the fastest that wins that day. You just never know.” –Jessica Kooreman

Off the ice

Kooreman has been married to Mike Kooreman, a retired short track skater, since 2015. They met at a World Cup competition in Russia, and had their first date in Germany on Valentine’s Day. Mike currently works as the program manager for the U.S. long track speed skating team, and will be their team leader at the 2018 PyeongChang Olympics.

The Kooremans live in Salt Lake City, Utah with their Jack Russell terrier, Hurley Bean, and their roommate, Olympic speed skater Brittany Bowe. Kooreman and Bowe were roommates before Kooreman and Mike married, and say that their house is like “Three’s Company.”

Kooreman found time amidst her training to earn her real estate license in Utah.
“I use my occupation to fund my athletic career and will continue with it after I have retired from speed skating,” she said. “Having a balanced work and athletic career is almost impossible at times due to the training that is required in my sport. We spend 6-8 hours per day training, which leaves very little time for my occupation. I have to push myself in my work with the same enthusiasm and drive that I put towards speed skating. It takes a lot of self-discipline to manage both.”

Social media
Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/JessicaSmithUSA/
Twitter: https://twitter.com/thejessicasmith
Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/thejessicakooreman/
Q&A with John-Henry Krueger

http://wwlp.com/2017/10/06/qa-with-john-henry-krueger/

What’s your family like?

My father, Bryan, is a corporate accountant. My mother, Heidi, is a competitive figure skating coach. My older brother Cole is a short track speed skater, representing Hungary.

In your hometown, what are your favorite spots to relax, eat out, etc.?

When I go home I go to my dad’s boss’s farm for target practice. I enjoy going to the Pittsburgh Paints Arena to watch the Pittsburgh Penguins. The strip district near downtown Pittsburgh is a street comprised of local food shops and cultural artisans. I also enjoy visiting the historic amusement park, Kennywood. I also like to take my dogs to Mingo Park (a large local county park). While there are many great restaurants in Pittsburgh I prefer my mom’s home cooking.

What time do you wake up? How much, and when, do you sleep each day during training?

6:00 a.m. I usually take naps after an early morning training session. I try to get at least 7-8 hour of sleep each night.

How much time do you spend training each day?

Every week is different depending on the training cycle, but a normal day can consist of 6-8 hours of training.

What’s your typical training day/schedule?

On a normal day I will wake up at 5:30 a.m. and get to the ice rink to start my off ice warm up at 6 a.m. The warm up consists of jogging, dynamic stretches, and light skating drill exercises to prepare for ice training. After warmup, I will go on the ice for two hours of training. After ice training the team will have off ice training that is commonly called dryland. This training can consist of weights, running, power jumps, and skating movements. After training I will go home to rest and eat. The second training session usually starts later in the day. In
the afternoon we will start dryland training first at 4 p.m. and that can last one to two hours. Then we will get back on the ice to skate for another two hours.

How do you work to achieve your daily goals?

A daily goal for me is usually a technical issue in my skating technique or balance on the ice. I only focus on that one problem or goal at a time. I try not to think about tomorrow’s problems or challenges. I try to work one day at a time.

What is your favorite workout or fitness trend?

I really like weight training. I only do it 2-3 times a week. While it remains very challenging for me it gives me a break from the off ice dryland training I do so much of.

What’s the most grueling work out you’ve ever done?

The hardest training I remember in my career was Sand Camp in Eerie, Pennsylvania. It was only off ice training. There were two dryland sessions each day, but each session lasted 4-6 hours. Lots of running and skating drills. The camps lasted about 5 days.

What would people be surprised to learn about training for the Olympics?

How much hard work and time is required to perform at the World Cup/Olympic level. Short track speed skating can look easy, but that’s only because athletes train many hours a day to make it look smooth and relaxed. I imagine that is how all the other sports work too. The best make it look easy.

Is there anything you do for training that’s out of the ordinary or experimental?

I don’t think so. While I am open to new training ideas and philosophies I feel very stable and set in my training philosophy. I’ve been training for a long time so I’ve been able to hone in on what training works for me and what doesn’t.
Have you ever been seriously injured?

I have been very fortunate not to have any serious injuries in my skating career. I try to take care of myself every day to hopefully avoid this.

What does a typical day of eating look like during training?

During the training season I won’t follow any special diet or nutrition plan. I try to get a healthy moderate mix of all the food groups. I don’t see food as a plan. Food is an enjoyable part of life for me. I don’t eat too much during training. The only regimen I will follow is to get some source of protein in me after a workout and to stay hydrated. Since I wake up early and I don’t have time to prepare a full breakfast will just have a granola bar or protein shake in the morning, I try to keep it simple.

During lunch I can have a pretty broad menu to work with. I will make something as simple a chicken salad or something more complex like a fish curry. It all depends on the day and what I feel like eating. Since training finishes late it is very common for the team to eat out together for dinner. There are so many different Korean foods to choose from. It’s different every night.

What’s your go-to snack?

Kimbap. It is very common Korean snack food. It is seaweed wrapped rice roll with meats and vegetables. The meats can vary from beef to tuna.

If you are to indulge, what’s your go-to meal?

Normally, when I have a cheat meal it will be a Korean BBQ meal. It comes with lots of side dishes. My favorite snack would be sour gummy candy. I try to limit myself.

What is your earliest memory of doing or seeing skating?

Earliest memory of my sport was training at a local ice rink near my house when I was very young. My passion evolved the longer I stayed in the sport. I liked racing and I was very competitive naturally.
What’s your earliest or favorite memory of watching the Olympics?

Watching the 2006 Torino Winter Games. It is a huge personal goal of mine to not only compete in but to medal in the Olympic Games.

Was there a specific “breakthrough” moment/competition when you finally realized you could compete in your sport at a high enough level to reach the Olympics?

I don’t think there was a single defining moment. It all accumulated after many successful races.

What’s something cool, weird intense about your sport that people don’t normally see? What’s the hardest part of your sport?

The way we lean on our very thin skating blades to turn in the corners is very intense. We very often pull close to 2gs in the corners. The sport is growing and many countries are competitive now. Racing strategy is very important now.

Are there any misconceptions about your sport that you would like to clear up?

Many people believe short track looks easy. The only time people watch short track in America is during the Olympics. They are only watching the best of the best who make it look effortless. It can take over a decade of training to skate at this level.

Who is your coach? How long have you been working together and what’s your relationship like?

Over the course of my career I have been fortunate to work with many coaches. The relationship with one’s coach is critical to a successful athlete. This coming season I will be working with Coach Nam Kyu Zo.

Who do you socialize with most within your sport or any sport? I mainly socialize with my training team in Korea and my teammates in America.
Have you ever worked with a sports psychologist? If so, how did it help you?

Yes, but very a very long time ago. She had a very positive influence on how to prepare mentally for races.

What’s the best piece of advice you’ve ever received?

In terms of my sport, the best advice I received was to experiment with everything. Technique, equipment, training philosophies. There is a short window of opportunity in the sport to be successful. Try to find everything that helps you grow in the sport personally.

What’s a big obstacle that you’ve overcome in your life?

Because of my skating career I had to become very independent at a very young age. However in the long run I see it as advantage and had a positive impact on the person I am today.

What is your biggest fear when competing?

I don’t really have a fear of anything, but I do hate to lose in a race.

What athlete in any sport has been your greatest source of inspiration?

Usain Bolt has been a favorite of mine over the years. I admire his relaxed, nonchalant, yet confident demeanor.

What advice would you give to a young child just starting out in short track?

To start off learning the basic techniques and to be patient with learning them. All skaters at the Olympic level start the season with the basics. You can never be too good for them.

What are your favorite sports teams?

Being from Pittsburgh it is almost mandatory to be a Pittsburgh Steelers fan. I also enjoy watching the Pittsburgh Penguins when I’m back in town.
Which Summer Olympic sport would you like to try?

I think I would enjoy some of the track and field events like the long jump and the 100 meter dash.

What are your pre-competition rituals?

I don’t have many. I just try to take care of my body every day the same way I would before a competition. So nothing really changes.

What languages do you speak?

I speak English and am very very very slowly learning Korean. What charities do you support? How did you become involved? Ballou Skies. My brother and I first learned of Ballou Skies through our attorney and agent Brian Koeberle. A business associate of his began this charity for his son who afflicted with Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy. My brother and I participate in their local fundraising events whenever we can. This charity has significantly impacted the treatment of this disease.

If you were not an athlete, what would you be doing?

I would probably be pursuing my goal of becoming an international English teacher.

When you have time off, what would constitute a perfect day for you?

Sleeping in late and going into downtown Seoul to meet with friends. How do you unwind after a competition?

I tend to stay indoors for a day or two to catch up on sleep. Short track races tend to be very stressful and last all day.

Do you have any fears?

I am deathly afraid of heights.

Do you like to travel? What has been the most special place you have traveled to and why?
Traveling is a huge passion of mine. Traveling to China has been very eye opening and influential. Experiencing different cultures and lifestyles broadens one’s horizons and perspectives.

What’s something quirky about yourself that people would be amused to learn?

I feel really grossed out by touching dirty dishes in the sink.

What are some of your hobbies?

Listening to music is a huge part of who I am helps me cope with all the different situations I face in life. Music is something I love to share with others but there are also times I prefer to listen alone.

Do you have any celebrity crushes?

Kim Sarang. She is a very famous Korean actress in South Korea.

What are some of your favorite movies?

Inglorious Bastards, John Wick, and Life is Beautiful

What are your favorite TV shows?

Rick and Morty, Star Trek: The Next Generation, One Piece

Are you a fan of K-Pop music?

Yes, there are many Korean artists I like such as ZICO, ZionT, Big Bang, Dynamic Duo, Crush, and Primary, to name just a few.

What are your personal care indulgences? What are your top five beauty/grooming products?

Since moving to Korea I have adopted some of the cultural lifestyle routines regarding skincare. I have been taking care of my skin a lot more since my move to Korea.

Outside of training for your sport, what physical routine makes you feel your best?

I love deep tissue massages and going to saunas for recovery.
What are five must-have items you always keep in your gym bag? Shaker Bottle, Protein bars, rubber exercise bands, foam roller, and tennis ball for hip foam rolling.

Do you like kimchi or any other Korean foods?

Yes, kimchi is a very common food in my diet. I enjoy almost all Korean food.

Have you ever done karaoke? What’s your go-to karaoke song?

No, I do not enjoy karaoke. Unfortunately for me, it remains a very popular and common activity in Korea.

What will success look like for you in PyeongChang? What are your goals?

To win an Olympic medal would be considered a success to me.
Q&A with Katherine Reutter-Adamek


Katherine Reutter-Adamek (who previously competed under just her maiden name, Reutter) won two medals at the 2010 Vancouver Olympics.

How influential were your parents in your athletic career and in what ways?

Extremely. Without their support I wouldn't have been in the 2010 Olympics or trying for 2018.

In your hometown, what are your favorite spots to relax, eat out, etc.?

Milwaukee-
1.) Bradford Beach
2.) Evo Ping Pong Bar
3.) Brewers game
4.) Summerfest
5.) Lopez Bakery

What time do you wake up?
6 a.m.

How much time do you spend training each day?
7 hours.

What’s your typical training day/schedule?
6:45-7:45am warm up; 8-10 skate; 10-10:45 cool down; 1:30pm warm up; 2-4 dryland, lifting, and/or cardio; 4-4:30 cool down

How do you work to achieve your daily goals?

Make a goal for each training session. If I'm feeling frustrated, I ask myself why I'm doing something and then if I know, I can work toward the goal. If I don't know, I can try something different.

What is your favorite workout or fitness trend?
Yoga

What’s the most grueling work out you’ve ever done?

Climbing Grouse Mountain in Vancouver twice.

What would people be surprised to learn about training for the Olympics?

How much other people are involved; I have a team of people who are the reason I'm able to physically and mentally handle the rigor of training and competing.

Is there anything you do for training that’s out of the ordinary or experimental?

Almost everything! I have a different view on technique and training, I'm the only World Team athlete to train in Milwaukee, I use power lifting technique in the weight room, and rely heavily on an unusual activation routine to keep my hips in alignment and my body warmed up every day.

Have you ever been seriously injured?


What does a typical day of eating look like during training?

Currently I'm on a Whole 30 diet. It started as a way to reduce inflammation when recovering from my concussion, but now it's a way of life. I haven't tried it during training yet.

If you are to indulge, what's your go-to meal, snack or dessert?

What is your earliest memory of doing or seeing skating?
I remember my first speed skating practice at 5. The coaches all said I skated like a figure skater. I wanted to prove them wrong and show them I could skate like a speedskater.

What's your earliest or favorite memory of watching the Olympics?

My Dad used to play video recordings we had of the 92 and 94 Olympics when I was home sick from school. I remember watching Dan Jansen, Bonnie Blair, Kathy Turner, and Amy Peterson all win their medals.

Was there a specific “breakthrough” moment/competition when you finally realized you could compete in your sport at a high enough level to reach the Olympics?

University Games in 2007. It gave me the confidence boost I needed to make my first world championship team.

What's something cool, weird intense about your sport that people don't normally see? What’s the hardest part of your sport?

The off-ice training. We have to train skating position all the time which is really hard on your body. Turning off your brain is the hardest part for me.

Are there any misconceptions about your sport that you would like to clear up?

It's all based on luck. Great skaters make their own luck and don't blame others when things don't go their way.

Who is your coach? How long have you been working together and what’s your relationship like?

Hong Yang Wang. He was my replacement when I stepped down from my head coaching job. He's been great! He always knows the right thing to say and I absolutely love working with him.

Who do you socialize with most within your sport or any sport?
I spend most of my time with my lifelong friends and family.

Have you ever worked with a sports psychologist? If so, how did it help you?

Yes, working with sports psychologists has been a critical part of training. Recently, I've been using a sports psych app called Vision Pursue that has literally changed my life inside and out of sport.

What’s the best piece of advice you’ve ever received?

There’s a difference between leading and pulling. Leading is easy... it's staying in control of the race and letting other move when they want to move. Pulling is hard. It will make you tired and you when the other skaters want to go you won't be able to stop them.

Life is the same. Controlling the controllable is relatively easy. Forcing things to be a certain way is hard and doesn't lead to outcome you want every time anyway.

What's a big obstacle that you've overcome in your life?

Anxiety and fear of failure. I wouldn't say I've overcome it, but I'm aware of it to the point where it doesn't overcome me.

What is your biggest fear when competing?

Losing and not being good enough.

Have you become close friends with any competitors from other countries? What about any from South Korea?

Elise Christie and Suzanne Schulting are two girls I really like and have a lot of respect for. There are two South Korean skaters from when I raced previously who I also like and have a lot of respect for: Lee Eun-Byul and Cho Ha-Ri. I loved racing both of them. They were true competitors who were always good sportsmen as well.

What was the best part of living in the Athletes’ Village during the Games?
The after party!

Who was the most influential in helping you achieve your dreams? My grandma Fern. People say I'm a lot like her and I know it's her optimism and energy that shines through me that allows me accomplish my goals.

Did anyone ever tell you that you wouldn’t be able to succeed in your sport? How were you able to overcome that?

Yes, I used it as motivation to prove them wrong.

How and where do you train over the summer?

In Milwaukee doing skating, running, jumping, biking, weight lifting, and skating specific work.

If you have already won an Olympic medal, where do you keep it?

I keep them in a drawer in a hallway table. I don't showcase it, but have it readily available to share if anyone wants to see it.

What is your favorite perk of being an elite Olympic athlete?

Working with chiropractors and athletic trainers all the time. I love learning about the body and how to keep mine in top condition.

Did you attend college? What was your degree and graduation year?

I graduated from DeVry University in December 2016 with a Bachelor's in Small Business and Entrepreneurship.

What’s your favorite animal? Have you ever seen it in person?

Panda! Only in a zoo.

If you were not an athlete, what would you be doing?

I'd like to be a personal trainer and private chef in addition to teaching power skating to hockey players.
When you have time off, what would constitute a perfect day for you?

Going to the beach and reading.

How do you unwind after a competition?

Close my eyes and listen to music.

Do you have any fears?

Failure.

Do you like to travel? What has been the most special place you have traveled to and why?

I like adventure. I don't have to travel far to feel like I'm doing something exciting and new. My favorite place so far has been Colorado. My family and I vacationed all over the state and many of my favorite family memories are from that trip.

What's something quirky about yourself that people would be amused to learn?

I have Dad humor... You have to get to know me before you understand my jokes.

What's your personal motto?

"If you can't be a highway, just be a trail. If you can't be a sun, be a star. For it isn't by size that you win or fail. Be the best of whatever you are." -- Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr

What are some of your hobbies?

Yoga, cooking, spending time with friends/family. I usually yoga by myself because I love the way it makes my mind and body feel. I like to cook with my fiancé. I travel to see my friends and family whenever I can.

What is your music of choice while training?
EDM or Pop. I really like Justin Bieber, The Chainsmokers, and Odesza.

Do you have any celebrity crushes?

Ryan Gosling.

Do you have an Olympic crush?

Evan Lysacek.

What are your favorite movies?

Pirates of the Caribbean, The Devil Wears Prada, Cool Runnings

What are your favorite TV shows?

Game of Thrones, Homeland, Vice

What are your personal care indulgences?

I love getting my nails done! I wish I could afford to dye my hair!

Outside of training for your sport, what physical routine makes you feel your best?

Meditating and going for walks outside.

What are five must-have items you always keep in your gym bag?

Heart rate monitor, cash, snack, migraine medicine, caffeinated gel or blocks

Have you been to South Korea before? What are you most looking forward to about the Games being hosted in South Korea? Anything you want to see or do?

Several times. I'm looking forward to competing in front of a huge crowd again. Short track is popular in every Olympics, but especially in South Korea!
Do you like kimchi or any other Korean foods?

Bibimbop. I like all Asian food, but don't love spicy food so I have to be careful in Korea.

Have you ever done karaoke? What’s your go-to karaoke song?
No, but it's on my bucket list!

What will success look like for you in PyeongChang? What are your goals?

To learn how to be more positive and grateful. I judge myself so hard and have such a high expectation of success. In my comeback I'm hoping to change that about myself so that I can love life, people, and experiences without judgment or harsh expectations. Life can be more fun than that :)

Will you head home for the holidays prior to the Games? What do you most look forward to? If not, where will you celebrate and with whom?

I have no idea... It's my fiancé's family year for Christmas so we will likely go to Park City with my parents to celebrate with everybody.

During the holidays, do you have a special meal or food that you’re always in charge of preparing?

Monkey bread! My grandma made it every Christmas and my mom and I have carried on her tradition. We made it last year with Hershey's kisses mixed in the dough. It's a keeper!!!

What’s on your Christmas or holiday list this year?

I love gifts that I wouldn't normally get myself like nice jewelry or something that would make life around the house easier. Miles or gift cards to travel are always great too. Even if I don't have a trip coming up it helps me be able to spend more time with friends and family.
Q&A with J.R. Celski


What's your family like?

My father is from St. Paul, Minnesota and my mother is from Seattle, Washington. They met in high school in Federal Way, WA when they were 17 years old after both families relocated to that area. My father attended West Point and joined the Army as an officer. They married after my father finished university. They then traveled around a bunch while he was in the Army, along the way having three sons all born in three different parts of the country/world. My brother Chris works at Nordstrom at their flagship store and sells suits for a living. He owns over 40 suits. He is married to Megan and they have a son named Ethan who turns 1 in April of 2017. My brother David is an officer in the Army and has been serving since 2007. He has been on 3 tours to the Middle East. He is married to Brit and they have a daughter named Quinn. She turns 2 this May.

Are you a first-generation American and where does your family come from?

My mother is first generation as her family moved here from the Philippines. My father's family has roots in Poland and Ireland.

How influential were your parents in your athletic career and in what ways?

My parents have had the biggest influence on my skating career. From getting me involved in the sport at 4 years old, taking me around the country to compete at regional and national levels, and finding me the right situations and coaches to help me along the way. I had a dream of competing in the Olympics and my parents never held me back from that. I wanted to move to Southern California in order to get the right training when I was 14. They sent me there along with my brother Chris. Everything they did was in order to provide and set me up for success in the sport and in life. I owe everything to my parents for keeping my dream alive and continuing to support me to this day.
Are you from a military family?

My father was a Major in the Army and my brother is currently a captain in the Army. The military has had a huge impact on my family. My parents moved around to several places in their lifetimes because of it. My father was stationed in Kansas when they had Chris, Germany when they had David, and California when they had me. When I was born, it was at the tail end of my Dad's career in the Army, so I didn't get to experience moving around a ton.

What are 5 must-do locations in your hometown?

My favorite spot to eat in Federal Way is Ichi Teriyaki. I go every time I make it back home. I spent a lot of time up the road in Seattle growing up and my favorite spots there are Fremont/Ballard, Alki and Capitol Hill. Paseo, Japonessa, Shiro's, and Ba Bar are my favorite restaurants.

How much time do you spend training each day?

6 - 8 hours a day is typical during our most intense periods. 6 is the average.

What’s your typical training day/schedule?

I wake up at 6:45, eat breakfast, drive to the rink around 7:15 and arrive at 7:40. I spend 20 minutes with my athletic trainer to make sure my body is aligned properly and work on any problem areas from previous training sessions. I then warm up for an hour starting at 8. Then I get on the ice at 9 and train until around 11. After ice, we have a dryland (skating exercises off the ice) or a cardio session that typically goes for a half hour to an hour. Do some recovery stuff and then eat lunch around noon and rest until our second training session which is either another ice session, weight session or cardio session. That typically lasts an hour or two. After that, I’ll head home, eat dinner, recover, and get ready to do it all over the next day.

How do you work to achieve your daily goals?
At different points in the season we work on different areas of fitness, technique and strength to improve our ability on the ice. Most of my time is spent planning, training, studying nutrition, studying film, recovering, or doing something that helps contribute to my success in my sport. I transformed a lot over the years in order to make sure my body is able to compete at the highest levels. After several injuries, I now have to pay attention and do all the right things in order to train on a daily basis and compete when I need to.

What is your favorite workout or fitness trend?

I really enjoy cycling. This is my favorite thing to do besides skate. I spend hours on the bike a week as this is one of the main facets of training that contributes to my fitness on the ice. What’s the most grueling work out you’ve ever done? Running park loops in Los Angeles at Kenneth Hahn Recreation Area. Each loop takes around 15 minutes and we run a total of 4 loops at max effort. I reach my max heart rate during this workout of 204 bpm.

What would people be surprised to learn about training for the Olympics?

There is a lot of downtime and rest that goes into the daily routine of being an athlete. Recovery is just as important if not more important than training, especially the older you get, so a lot of time is spent taking care of small injuries, or nuisances that potentially could take you out of training.

Have you ever been seriously injured? What did it take for you to come back from that injury?

Injury has been a big part of my journey in my sport. I have been injured several times during my career and I would say a couple of them define who I am as an athlete. The cut to my leg before the Olympics in 2010 was single handedly the hardest situation I've ever been through, physically and mentally. It took a whole team of dedicated supporters (doctors, trainers, family, friends, coaches, teammates) to help lift me up off the ground and get me back to competing at a high level again. It took hours and hours in the rehab room, pool, and on the ice as a part of my recovery. A couple of my
injuries occurred right in the middle of my season which took me out of very important competitions, a lot of discouragement comes from injuring yourself at important times, so the biggest part of my fight has been mental, trying to overcome the obstacles in my mind before I tackle them physically.

What does a typical day of eating look like during training?
I eat pretty normal. No frills. My philosophy is eating food that comes from the earth and that's all natural. I tend to stay away from processed foods until I reach the off season or I want to indulge after a hard week of training.

If you are to indulge, what's your go-to snack?
Ice cream is my vice along with chocolate cream pie and Oreos.

What is your earliest memory of doing or seeing skating?
My earliest memory was at age 3, walking around with my fisher price plastic skates on, accompanied by my mom and dad. This brought a lot of joy to me early on. I really enjoyed the feeling on my skates. Creating pressure into either the pavement, wood or ice in order to create speed. This is a strange concept to anyone that skates. Pushing sideways in order to go straight is one that I still feel like I haven't mastered. This is why I keep going. To try and perfect what I do every single day and lap I skate.

What's your earliest or favorite memory of watching the Olympics?
My earliest memory was watching Michael Johnson win Gold in both the 200m and 400m in Atlanta 96. It stuck out to me because of the Gold shoes he wore and the single hoop gold earring. He was a beast.
Was there a specific “breakthrough” moment/competition when you finally realized you could compete in your sport at a high enough level to reach the Olympics?
The 2009 World Championships in Vienna was my breakthrough competition. I was consistent in my results, winning several medals and placing 2nd overall to a field that was my main competition during
the Olympics the next season. This gave me a lot of confidence that I was on the right track.

What's something cool, weird intense about your sport that people don't normally see? What's the hardest part of your sport?

Everyone has their own routines before the race so it's pretty funny watching people do the same thing over and over, either in the heat box or in warm up. The hardest part is losing. We spend every day trying to be the best we can be and when we come up short, it's hard to accept right away.

Are there any misconceptions about your sport that you would like to clear up?

Short track although there is a lot of luck involved, skill definitely overtakes luck when it comes to winning 9 times out of 10. You can't say that people win in this sport because of luck. A lot of times it's about being in the right place at the right time and putting yourself in a position to win.

Who is your coach? How long have you been working together and what's your relationship like?

Anthony Barthell and Alex Izykowski. I've been working with these guys on and off for the past few years. We grew up in similar times in the sport as they both competed before coaching. I consider them friends before coaches. They help push me to work harder every day. Who do you socialize with most within your sport or any sport? Definitely my teammates. We are out there on the ice and in training grinding it out wanting to achieve the same thing so there's a lot of respect for the amount of effort we put into it. Having people out there to push you and make you better in the same time helping each other reach goals is a beautiful thing.

Have you ever worked with a sports psychologist? If so, how did it help you?

Yes. Sports psychology is a very important element in my game. Although I might not have the physical capability I once had due to
injury and age, working on my mind is where I can bridge the gap. There are several areas to improve mentally in order to give myself an edge over my competition. A lot of it is repetition and when there's new circumstances, being able to adapt and not let emotions get in the way.

What’s the best piece of advice you’ve ever received?

My dad always used to tell me "If you want it bad enough, you'll find a way. If you don't, you'll find an excuse."

What's a big obstacle that you've overcome in your life?

Growing up, I was always interested in a lot of different things. Whether it is music, film, food, I always wanted to try different things and exercise my creative mind. This affected my focus in skating sometimes. I wasn't always completely dedicated to the sport, and found myself a lot of the times wanting to experience something different. I quit a couple times because of this. It wasn't until recent times that I was able to give skating my 100% focus. This was definitely a big obstacle.

What is your biggest fear when competing?

That I won't have what it takes to achieve my goals.

Who is your Olympic role model?

The men's Paralympic sled hockey team. I had a chance to meet a bunch of these guys and every one of their stories resonates with me. The obstacles they've had to overcome in their lives not only to play their sport, but just to survive and live is something that everyone needs to hear.

Within your sport, who has been your greatest influence and why? Wilma Boomstra, my coach from the time I was 14. She has always been there for me, through thick and thin. She raised me in the sport and continues to work with me to this day. She's seen me in my lowest points and still knows I have what it takes to succeed.
What athlete in any sport has been your greatest source of inspiration?

Manny Pacquiao. He stays humble through victory and defeat. He electrifies the crowd and makes his fans proud of what he does in the ring.

What advice would you give to a young child just starting out in short track?

Hard work and dedication are only a couple qualities you need to have in order to reach your goals. Patience, consistency, and understanding that things aren't going to happen overnight will ultimately get you where you want to go. Growing in skating means growing in life, they both go hand in hand, and experience in each will contribute to your success on and off the ice.

Who is your biggest rival? Is it friendly or contentious?

There are a handful of people from different countries. I don't really have "beef" with anyone; it's mostly cordial as we race each other so many times. I definitely have a couple people on my radar going into the next season.

Have you become close friends with any competitors from other countries? Any from South Korea?

I'm pretty close to a couple skaters I grew up with in the sport. Victor Knoch and Jack Whelbourne. We started on the International scene around the same time and stay in touch. I also grew up racing Lee Jung-su and Kwak Yoon-gy, and they are definitely some of my favorite people to race.

What was the best part of living in the Athletes' Village during the Games?

The Athletes' Village in Vancouver was ridiculously nice: million-dollar condos that we inhabited for a couple weeks before they were sold after the Olympics. There was a barn type building with pool tables
and video games. Cool for the social aspect as you ran into several different athletes in different sports and got to make friends.

Are you a fan of any professional sports teams?

My favorite sport is football. I'm a Seahawks fan until I'm in the grave, have been since I was born. I also enjoy watching and playing golf. Relaxing and challenging all at the same time.

Do you play any other sports?

Golf.

Which Summer Olympic/Paralympic event would you like to try?

Ski jumping.

Who was the most influential in helping you achieve your dreams?

My parents were the most influential people in my life when it came to pursuing my sport. They provided me with everything I needed to succeed. Drove me to practice, competitions, bought the equipment, paid for ice time, travel, and everything else you could think of. They also allowed me to move to California when I was 14 years old in order to get the training I needed to succeed.

Did anyone ever tell you that you wouldn't be able to succeed in your sport? How were you able to overcome that?

No, no one has ever told me I couldn't do anything in my life. I have been surrounded with the best family and friends one could ever ask for and all are completely supportive of what I do.

Where do you keep your Olympic medals?

My mom and dad hold on to my medals. They love showing people and telling the stories of how they came about.

What is your favorite perk of being an elite Olympic athlete?
Being able to train every day. It's such a good lifestyle. I'm able to stay healthy, eat pretty much what I want, and workout for a living. What more could you ask for? Also, traveling is pretty good. We get to go to a lot of cool places around the world and see things I definitely wouldn't have made it out to on my own.

What are your pre-competition rituals?

I have to get a haircut before I travel anywhere. I bring along the same foods and supplements that I eat at home. I always put my left skate on first.

Do you have a nickname?

Celskeet from my friends down in Long Beach, CA. This was my gamer tag when we played counterstrike back in high school. Nasty, from my friends in Salt Lake. I'd prefer not to share the story on this one. Mowgli from my coach Wilma. She thinks I look like him and act the same way.

Do you have any hidden talents?

Juggling, playing guitar.

Do you have any tattoos?

A chest tattoo of the Filipino Sun and Stars surrounding the Polish Eagle. I got this along with my two brothers to show respect to our ancestry.

Do you collect anything?

I used to collect coins when I was a kid. Now I collect beer bottle caps. I enjoy drinking beer from around the world, not in volume of course. My favorite being Belgian Trappist ales.

What is your favorite animal?

Penguins
What charities do you support? How did you become involved?

I am part of Classroom Champions. I got a call from Steve Mesler one day to talk about the organization and I really liked the idea of it. It wasn't until a couple years after that I got set up through a friend to be a part of it.

If you were not an athlete, what would you be doing?

Film production.

When you have time off, what would constitute a perfect day for you?

Sleep in until 10 am. Get my backpacking supplies ready along with my fiancée and a couple friends. Drive out to a spot, hike in, set up camp. Fish and cook some food. Chill out and listen to some tunes. Make a fire, eat some more, makes s'mores and post up around the fire.

How do you unwind after a competition?

I typically just like to do something different for a while, especially during the offseason. I really enjoy traveling, so I tend to do that a bunch. Road trips are always nice. Seeing family and friends I'm not able to see is a plus. And sleeping in always feels good for more than 1 day in a row.

Do you have any fears?

Cockroaches. Don't do it.

Do you like to travel? What has been the most special place you have traveled to and why?

My favorite country to travel to is Belgium. They have it figured out there, great food, drinks and people are friendly. I also really like Japan. It's cleanliness, and food are on point.

What's something quirky about yourself that people would be amused to learn?
I have a thing for house plants.

What's your personal motto?

Everybody is going to face challenges, what defines you is how you overcome them.

What are some of your hobbies?

Bouldering: I climb with my friends at the local gym at least twice a week. I got into it pretty recently but I love the challenge of it and the social aspect.

Golf: I learned from my Grandpa before he passed. I love this game because of the mental aspect. You really have to calm your mind in order to play well.

Backpacking: I go during the spring and summer along with some friends. We usually go around Utah, the High Uintas. I like it because it's a true escape from the daily routine.

Cinematography: I love film, enjoy watching it and enjoy the feeling you can derive from it.

What is your music of choice while training?


Do you have any celebrity crushes?

Kate Mara.

Outside of training for your sport, what physical routine makes you feel your best?

Bouldering at the gym and playing golf. Both help me work on my mental game for relaxation and challenge.
What are five must-have items you always keep in your gym bag?

Headphones, charger for headphones, water, protein bar, protein drink

Have you been to South Korea before? What are you most looking forward to about the Games being hosted in South Korea? Anything you want to see or do?

Yes, I love South Korea. The landscape, food and culture are great. I look forward to my sport as South Koreans love short track and I know it's going to be the most exciting sport in the Games. I'm looking forward to the food and energy of the Games.

Do you like kimchi or any other Korean foods?

Everything about Korean food. Sundubu-Jjigae, Galbi, Bulgogi, Japchae, Bibimbap are a few favorites.

Have you ever done karaoke? What’s your go-to karaoke song?

Yes, anything R. Kelly or Outkast is my go to.

What will success look like for you in PyeongChang? What are your goals?

Olympic gold.
When she's training with the U.S. Speedskating team in Utah, Kimi Goetz of Flemington is on the ice two hours a session -- every morning Monday through Saturday, and three afternoons each week. That's 18 hours a week. Then there's the off-ice conditioning -- lifting weights, running, riding a bike. And Goetz is one of two skaters on the team that also has a job.

Goetz, listed as 22nd in the women's 1000m rankings, acknowledges it's a demanding schedule, then adds with a smile, "It doesn't feel like work when you love it."

Goetz was home in Flemington for an eight-day break before she heads back for the intensive training that will lead into competition starting in the fall. On Thursday night many of her former neighbors and friends turned out for a fundraising reception at Flemington Furs.

"There's a lot of New York Avenue people here tonight," Goetz said, then recalled, "The Gormans used to have to watch out for me and my sister skating on the street."

As well-wishers asked questions, Goetz gave a glimpse into the world of competitive speedskating.

The Koreans are the biggest international threat, she said, for both male and female skaters. "They're the strongest, I think," she said. And for a sport that's supposed to be non-contact, "there's a lot of contact," she said, laughing.

The blades on Goetz's skate are 18 inches long, but they're curved. "If you look closely, you'll see only about that much blade is on the ice," she said, measuring about 4 inches with her fingers.

At her fastest, Goetz skates a lap in 8.7 seconds, about 30 mph.
Goetz started skating at the Frenchtown Roller Rink, and won gold in inline skating in 2010 before turning to ice skating in 2012. When she placed fifth at the U.S. trials for the Sochi Olympics, it was her second official ice meet, after 9 months on the ice.

While holding down a job and training at the same time isn't easy, Goetz said she loves her job. "If I didn't have a job, I'd be stuck in a very small circle," she said. "It's nice to have a life outside of skating." Speedskating is not inexpensive. Skates cost $2,000. New blades cost $1,100. Thursday night's event brought the community's fundraising efforts to over $8,000, said Mayor Phil Greiner, who with his wife Joan has helped rally borough support for Goetz.

"I wouldn't be able to keep moving forward without the support from my mom and everyone," Goetz said.
Medfield’s Letai heading to Olympic Trials

http://www.hometownweekly.net/medfield/medfields-letai-heading-olympic-trials/

Medfield High School senior Julie Letai has earned a spot at the U.S. Olympic Trials for short-track speed-skating. Airing live on NBC, the trials take place in Salt Lake City, Utah, on December 15-17. Sixteen women, ranging in age from 17 to 32, will compete for just three spots on the Olympic Team.

Letai, age 17, is also one of four women across the country to be named to the National Junior Development Team. She started speed-skating at age 8 at the BayState Speedskating Club in Walpole.
OLYMPIC DREAMS
Columbus native headed for speedskating trials

http://www.therepublic.com/2017/09/10/olympic_dreams/

Losing her skating coach and missing the 2014 Olympic Trials by one-hundredth of a second caused Columbus native Taylor Wentz to question if she should continue her speedskating career.

“I thought it would be best to take a break and re-evaluate what I wanted to do, if skating was something I thought I wanted to do for the next four years,” Wentz said. “Just kind of re-evaluate my goals and kind of find the fun in skating again.”

After taking a break for part of the 2015-16 season, Wentz put her skates back on and found the joy in speedskating again. Her new coach and 2010 Olympic gold medalist Linlin Sun helped her find her new perspective on skating.

Now, Wentz is headed to this year’s Olympic Trials from Dec. 15 to 17 at the Olympic Oval in Salt Lake City, Utah. The Columbus East graduate, who now lives in Salt Lake City, qualified for the trials after earning one of the last four qualifying spots at the American Cup in August.

Sixteen women will be competing at the Olympic Trials for a chance to compete in the Olympics in South Korea in early February. Twelve of the women already had prequalified, and Wentz said jockeying for one of the four final spots was pretty stressful.

“It was really tough racing it,” Wentz said. “It definitely came down to the last race on the last day. It wasn’t decided until then. It was a stressful weekend, but I just tried to get as many points as I could every single race.”

Wentz had to race the 1,500 meters, 1,000 and 500 race twice and said that ended up being about eight races a day for three days during the American Cup. She said it was probably one of the hardest races she’s ever done.
The top three at the trials qualify for the Olympics. If the relay team qualifies for the Olympics, then the top five skaters will advance. If the relay team doesn’t qualify, then only the top three will. Wentz said everyone’s best chance for an Olympic medal is on the relay team. Wentz is in her sixth year as a speedskater but had been figure skating for 15 years before that. She first started taking skating lessons as a toddler at the Hamilton Center Ice Arena to launch her figure skating career. It wasn’t until the Crossroads Speed Skating Club came to Columbus in 2010 when Wentz decided to learn how to speed skate for her 2011 senior project.

Her senior project has turned into trips all over the world to places like Spain and Canada to compete in speedskating competitions. Wentz even won the 2013 intermediate Ladies National Championship. She continues to represent Columbus by skating under Crossroads Speed Skating as her club affiliation.

Wentz still hasn’t lost her figure skating roots, though. After going two years without any figure skating, Wentz realized how much she missed the sport.

“I think that is part of what made me really sad because I love figure skating so much,” Wentz said. “A figure skater will always be what I really am.”

Wentz keeps her figure skating roots in tact by teaching figure skating at the Utah Olympic Oval in the evenings after her own training. Wentz is currently toying with the idea of ending her speedskating career after this year.

She and her husband, Michael Burdekin, got married in September 2016, and Wentz said it has been a bit of a challenge finding time to spend together with their busy schedules. Burdekin is a retired speedskater, so he understands the demands of Wentz’s training.

“It’s almost like our lives are a little bit on pause until I am done skating,” Wentz said. “Hopefully, we will get to do more real life stuff after, but he understands, so that’s nice at least.”
Wentz will wait to see what happens after the Olympics with the cycle of skaters who leave and new skaters coming in before deciding to hang it up or not. Her goal is to eventually move back to Columbus to be with her family.

“I think eventually we will move back to Columbus, whether it’s this April or maybe in the summer of next season; we’ll see,” Wentz said. “This is my sixth year now that I’ve been out here (in Utah), and I would really like to come home. I miss home.”