

US Speedskating Media Clips

Five Months Away From Winter Games, US Speedskaters Say They're On Track

<https://www.teamusa.org/US-Speedskating/News/Featured-News/2017/September/18/Five-Months-Away-From-Winter-Games-US-Speedskaters-Say-Theyre-On-Track>

Speedskaters Sugar Todd and Mitch Whitmore both represented the United States at the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi. Those Olympics, you might recall, did not work out well for the USA. But Todd and Whitmore say things are already looking a lot different for US Speedskating at the upcoming Winter Games in PyeongChang, South Korea.

"We're really prepared, we're really focused, and our team is jiving well together," says Todd. "We've really grown into a great relationship with our coach. Everything's going pretty phenomenal at this point."

Whitmore agrees. "Everything has been dialed in," he says, "to make sure we perform in 2018."

Team USA failed to medal in long-track events at the 2014 Games, after a largely successful World Cup season leading up to that Olympics. Over the next five months, Todd and Whitmore say an intricate plan is in place to make sure they're ready. In fact, that work has been underway for quite some time.

"Last year, for example, we followed - pretty much to a 'T' - what our plan will be for this Olympic season, with training camps and travel and preparations," Todd explains.

That also means planning everything - the kinds of food they'll eat on the road, and knowing which staff members are taking care of the skaters' blades.

"Even little things," says Whitmore, "like having blackout shades and being prepared for sleep that way." He also pointed to eating - the team nutritionist has been practicing Olympic meals so they'll be perfected by Olympic season.

The team has been holding an early season training camp at Milwaukee's Pettit National Ice Center over the past couple of weeks. It's a return to an important place for both Todd and Whitmore, who grew up skating at the Pettit. Todd graduated from Wauwatosa East, Whitmore from Waukesha North. Both now train full-time in Utah.

And while they say the ice at the Utah Olympic Oval is faster than it is in Milwaukee, they think the both the ice and the elevation of the Pettit better simulates what they'll experience in South Korea.

Todd, Whitmore, and the other U.S. medal hopefuls will be back in Wisconsin shortly before the Winter Games - the U.S. Long Track Olympic Team Trials will take place at the Pettit January 2-7, 2018.

Grand Rapids brothers lead US Speedskating

<http://woodtv.com/2017/09/28/grand-rapids-brothers-lead-us-speedskating/>

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (WOOD) — Athletes in most sports are still working to earn their tickets to the 2018 Winter Olympics, but coaching positions have been filled for a while.

One of those coaches is Grand Rapids native Matt Kooreman, who's in charge of the U.S. Speedskating long track team.

"It's a complete honor to represent Team USA and I hope we make everybody proud," he told 24 Hour News 8.

His brother, Mike Kooreman, is one of the team leaders. The brothers learned to skate with the Grand Rapids Speedskating Club.

"You can't beat it, right? Who would have thought? If you would have told me 10 years ago my brother would be head coach of the national team, I'd be the team leader and my wife would be racing, I would have told you you were crazy," Mike Kooreman said.

The Olympic Games run Feb. 9 to Feb. 25 in Pyeongchang, South Korea. Only two U.S. athletes have qualified so far; both are biathletes.

U.S. speedskaters back home at Pettit Center

<https://www.jsonline.com/story/sports/columnists/gary-damato/2017/09/19/damato-u-s-speedskaters-back-home-pettit-center/679174001/>

U.S. Speedskating made a series of curious decisions on behalf of its national long-track team in the months leading up to an [abysmal performance at the 2014 Winter Olympics](#).

Foremost among them was the underutilization of the Pettit National Ice Center in prepping for an Olympic Games that would be contested at sea level in Sochi, Russia.

Instead, the team trained almost exclusively at altitude at the Utah Olympic Oval and the federation held its Olympic trials there. Immediately before the Games, the skaters had a training camp in the mountains of northern Italy.

Lesson learned.

U.S. Speedskating has made training at the Pettit Center a priority as the long-track team preps for the 2018 Olympics in PyeongChang, South Korea. The building near I-94 that thousands of commuters whiz by daily on their way to and from downtown Milwaukee could be the key to Olympic redemption.

“Absolutely,” said Brittany Bowe, a two-time world sprint champion. “The Olympics are at sea level and we have this awesome facility here at the Pettit to utilize.”

The long-track skaters recently completed a two-week training camp in Milwaukee. The Pettit Center will play host to the U.S. Olympic trials Jan. 2-7. Then the team will be back in Milwaukee for a final two-week camp Jan. 14-30 before leaving for PyeongChang. The Olympic Games are Feb. 9-25.

Why does it matter where the team trains?

Simply put, skating on slower ice and in heavier air at sea level requires a different technique than skating at altitude, where the air is thinner, the ice is faster and skaters are able to glide farther with each stroke.

It stands to reason that skaters should train in conditions that closely simulate what they will face in the biggest races – i.e. the Olympics – but that hasn’t been the case in recent years for the U.S. long-track team.

In 2001, the team relocated from Milwaukee to the newly built Olympic Oval in suburban Salt Lake City and then won eight medals on their home ice at the 2002 Winter Games.

Federation coaches fell in love with altitude training, but the problem was the next three Olympics were held at sea level. The Americans’ medal count dipped to seven in Turin, then to four in Vancouver, then to zero in Sochi – the first time the long-track team was shut out in 30 years.

While other factors could have been in play, not the least of which was a new high-tech skin suit that had never been tested in competition prior to Sochi and was [ditched halfway through the Games](#), many believe the heavy emphasis on altitude training was at least partially to blame.

In the wake of that immensely disappointing showing in Sochi, U.S. Speedskating evaluated every aspect of its skaters’ training and equipment. One of the conclusions was that the 400-meter oval in Milwaukee needed to be put to better use.

Paul Golomski, the Pettit Center facility director and icemaker, has been in PyeongChang to help with ice preparations at the Olympic venue and will replicate those conditions as closely as possible for the Olympic trials and the pre-Olympic training camp in Milwaukee.

“The Pettit Center has been awesome in working with us and trying to set up conditions that are going to be similar to South Korea,” said U.S. sprint coach Matt Kooreman. “So for our pre-Olympic camp this year, the ice temperature should be similar, the humidity, the air in the arena is all being matched up to what we expect in South Korea.”

It still comes down to the skaters being prepared and in peak condition physically and mentally. At least motivation won't be a problem.

“We're definitely out for redemption,” Bowe said. “Looking back at Sochi, all you can do is look at yourself in the mirror and, like, you didn't get it done. Whether it's this or that, you only have yourself to look at. It's you vs. the clock.

“We've done some pretty incredible things since then but at the end of the day it comes down to that one race. We'll have to wait and see, but I know Team USA is definitely out for redemption.”

KC Boutiette looks to blaze another new trail as speedskating's oldest Olympian since 1924

<http://amp.usatoday.com/story/714207001/>

PARK CITY, Utah -- Parenting lessons aren't the only reason KC Boutiette is trying to make an Olympic team.

But they are an added bonus.

A trailblazer 20-plus years ago when he made the transition from inline to ice, Boutiette hopes to make history of a different sort at the 2018 Pyeongchang Games. At 47, he would be the oldest speedskater to make an Olympic team since Albert Tebbit, who was 52 when he competed for Britain at the 1924 Games.

"My family hasn't seen this side of my life and I have an opportunity to go to another Olympics. That's why I'm doing it," said Boutiette, who competed at the 1994, 1998, 2002 and 2006 Winter Games. "And I've got a 5-year-old son and he's learning how to win, how to lose, what it's like in sport, because you can't win everything.

"He wants Dad to win so bad," Boutiette said, recalling a recent meet in the Netherlands where he finished fifth. "After that race, I picked him up and I took him for a lap with me on the ice. That's our time to talk. That's our time for me to say, 'You can't win them all. I did my best, I had fun. I was fifth place, still pretty awesome.'

"It's fantastic for me to be able to live that with him."

Boutiette won't lie, though. It'd be even more fantastic if his son could see him on an Olympic podium.

Boutiette did not win a medal in his first four Olympics, his best finish a fifth in the 5,000 meters in 2002. Still, after a brief comeback attempt ahead of the Vancouver Games in 2010, he was happily retired. He and his wife, Kristi, had two small children, and Boutiette was growing his business of custom-made cycling shoes.

Then the International Skating Union announced it was adding the mass start race to the Olympic program beginning in Pyeongchang.

Unlike traditional long-track races, which are essentially a series of two-person time trials, mass start has been likened to a bike race. The 24 skaters start the 16-lap race together, obviously, and there are four sprints throughout the race. The last of those sprints ends at the finish line, meaning the first three across the line get gold, silver and bronze.

Because of the sprints and the breakaways that often precede them, strategy is key, and a skater who is savvy often fares better than one who is simply fast.

Which makes the mass start perfect for Boutiette, who no longer has that finishing burst that made him so successful early in his career but makes up for it with the wisdom gained from more than a quarter-century of racing.

"It caters to somebody with a little bit more brains and a little more patience," said Joey Mantia, who won the mass start at last year's world championships. "Obviously, when you're aged 47, you've seen a lot of racing and you've done a lot of things. It suits him well."

He proved that in November with a silver medal at a World Cup race in Nagano, Japan. That made Boutiette the oldest skater ever to win a World Cup medal.

“That was awesome,” Boutiette said, grinning. “When I got on the podium, I was like, should I call it? Should this be it?’ Then me and the wife talk and she’s like, ‘We’re so close, it’s only a year away.’”

Boutiette won’t know if he’s going to a fifth Olympics until January. But he does know that, no matter what happens, this is it. He also knows what he’d do with a medal should he win one: Chop it up.

No, seriously. Boutiette says he would cut his medal into as many pieces as he could and send them to everyone who has helped him along the way.

“Letting someone wear your medal and take a picture, that’s one thing. But now that picture is going to sit on your phone. But if you send someone a piece of a medal – it’s going to sit in a drawer for me – that would be the coolest thing ever because they’re a part of your team,” Boutiette said.

“That’s the way I look at things and that’s exactly what I would do with my medal,” he said. “You’d have maybe a little piece of a medal and a ribbon, that’s what I would be left with.”

Well, that and all those life lessons he’ll be passing on to his kids.

Who is KC Boutiette

<http://wwlp.com/2017/10/06/who-is-kc-boutiette/>

Speed skater KC Boutiette made his Olympic debut at the 1994 Lillehammer Winter Games, and is aiming for a medal in the mass start in PyeongChang.

Speed skating beginnings

KC Boutiette first became aware of skating at ten years old, when he saw Eric Heiden—or as he remembers it, “some dude in a gold suit with big legs”—skating at the 1980 Olympics.

Already a roller skater on quad (four wheel) skates, Boutiette was struck by the speed skaters’ tight uniforms, a stark contrast to the more laidback outfits Boutiette was used to. “[At the time] we were wearing loose clothing, what have you, and no helmets, so we thought we were cool,” he remembers thinking.

But he also recalls thinking to himself, “Well, I wanna go to the Olympics too. This guy won five gold medals. I wanna win something too.”

12 years later, Boutiette quit his job as a construction worker to dedicate himself full-time to competitive inline skating, and in 1993 he won the prestigious International Inline Skating Association title.

But the then-23-year-old still had an itch to compete at the Olympics, so he borrowed his friend’s too-small skates and tried skating on ice for the first time.

“Needless to say, one of my toenails came off. But I was so excited to skate. That’s all I wanted. So I just jammed my feet into these bad boys and started ripping up some laps.”

And only six weeks after trying the sport, Boutiette made the 1994 Olympic team.

Olympic experience

Boutiette qualified for the 1994 Lillehammer Winter Olympics in one event, the 1500m, and finished 39th.

Four years later at the 1998 Nagano Olympics, Boutiette raced in three distances and finished in the top ten with American record times in all—but didn’t win a medal. His best result was in the 1500m, where he broke the Olympic record. But four other skaters subsequently beat his time to reset the record, and he finished fifth.

However, it was another race in Nagano that he names as the best moment of his Olympic career.

“My favorite Olympic moment, believe it or not, was an eighth place finish in the 10,000 meters in Nagano in 1998,” he said. “It wasn’t a medal. It wasn’t—it’s hard to explain. You know, when you go as fast as you possibly can and you push yourself to the limit, all you can do is expect the best out of yourself.”

Paired with a more decorated skater, Boutiette remembers being surprised when he started pulling ahead and then crossed the finish line first.

“I’m like, wow, that was a 20 second personal best, a new American record. I couldn’t have gone any faster. That was my favorite Olympic moment,” he said.

At the 2002 Salt Lake City Games, Boutiette set yet another American record in the 5000m but finished off the podium in fifth.

Boutiette’s last Olympic appearance came in Torino in 2006. Already one of the oldest skaters at 35 years old, Boutiette finished 19th in the 5000m and sixth in the team pursuit.

Breakout moment

Nearly eight years after his last Olympic appearance, Boutiette proved to himself and others that he was still a top speed skater when he competed at the U.S. Olympic Trials ahead of the 2014 Sochi Olympics.

While Boutiette never officially retired after Torino, he moved to Miami to run a bike shop and competed sparingly. In 2013, a suggestion from Eric Heiden, who had inspired him back in 1980, pushed Boutiette back into the sport.

The two friends were discussing the approaching U.S. Olympic Trials for the 2014 Sochi Olympics. Boutiette remembers Heiden telling him, “Man, you should skate. You know, just show these kids that you can still do it.”

Boutiette didn’t make the speed skating team for Sochi, but he did surprise himself and Heiden with his respectable race times.

“I skated the 1,000 meter and I skated a great time,” Boutiette said. “I mean, it was a fantastic time for me. And coming off the ice, [Heiden is] high fiving me. He’s like, ‘Man, where did that come from?’ “And I was like, ‘Dude, it just happens.’ But having a guy like that in your back pocket supporting you, and cheering you on is huge.”

Boutiette didn’t make the Sochi team, but performed strongly enough that it seemed the PyeongChang Olympics weren’t out of reach—especially when he learned that a new event, the mass start, would be added to the Olympic program in 2018.

Major competitions

In the mass start, up to 24 skaters race simultaneously, as opposed to racing in pairs like in the other individual speed skating races.

“The mass start is like NASCAR on ice,” Boutiette said. “You’ve got 24 guys ripping around, tight turns, crashes, strategic maneuvers the whole race, everyone’s trying to position themselves behind this guy or that guy, and everyone kinda has a game plan... So there are a lot of mathematics going on during the race. And the really cool thing is that the first guy across the line wins, and that’s what makes it real exciting.”

Boutiette thought that his success in skating marathons, which have a similar format to mass start, would give him an advantage in this new event. He was proved right at the Nagano World Cup in 2016.

His goal for the mass start was to perform well enough in the intermediate sprints, which result in sprint points, in order to qualify the U.S. a world championship berth. But after winning the second immediate sprint, “I glance back, nobody’s with me, so I just kinda continue to skate off.” When two

other skaters catch up with him, he thought to himself, “Oh man this is gonna hurt bad” but decided to try and stay with the race leaders.

“I was just struggling... I don’t know if I’m gonna make it or not. And then with two laps to go I’m like, ‘Man, we got a shot.’ I don’t know how I did it, actually, but you know, at the end it was that close and I ended up getting a silver medal, which was actually one of my highlights of my career.”

In addition to winning a mass start silver medal at the 2016 Nagano World Cup, Boutiette finished 12th at the 2017 World Single Distance Championships in the same event.

Records held

Boutiette’s medal-winning performance at the Nagano World Cup was not just a personal triumph—it was a historical one. Then 46 years old, Boutiette became the oldest speed skater ever to win a World Cup medal.

If Boutiette wins an Olympic medal in PyeongChang, he’ll be the oldest speed skater ever to do so. That honor currently belongs to Finland’s Julius Skutnabb, who was 38 years old when he won 5000m silver at the 1928 St. Moritz Olympics.

In addition to the American and Olympic records he’s set over the course of his career, Boutiette was a world record holder—for about 24 hours. On March 15th, 1997, Boutiette broke the 1500m world record, but it was broken again the next day by Canada’s Neal Marshall.

Signature

Many of the current U.S. speed skating stars, like Heather Bergsma, Brittany Bowe and Joey Mantia, started their careers on inline skates, and it’s a very common for top inline athletes to transition to ice in pursuit of their Olympic dream.

But Boutiette was one of the first to do so, and is considered the “godfather” of inline to ice skaters.

Top quotes

“Man, my entire career I’ve been at a disadvantage. I was always the smallest and when skating on the old roller skates, they were so heavy that my little legs could barely lift them up. But I always fought my way through the pack and found a way to win a few here and there. On the ice, a guy in Southern California told me that I would never make it. This prick was one reason when I started getting good I could throw it in his face. But this prick taught me something in the process: never talk shit to someone if you don’t know who they are and or what they are capable of.” — KC Boutiette on challenges he’s faced in his skating career

Off the ice

In addition to training and competing, Boutiette owns Rocket7, a business that makes custom cycling shoes.

“It’s hard to run a business and train at the same time,” he said. “It’s hard but I have good people around me who do what they can to help me with my skating.” In his downtime during competitions, he often works on artwork for his shoes or responds to business-related emails.

His biggest support is his wife, Kristi.

“My wife Kristi is my rock, though. She does everything for me and keeps me rolling... Not only is she the bread winner in our family but she cooks and does everything for all of us all the time. We call her ‘my sponsor!’”

They have two children, five-year-old son Braam (whose name is the Dutch word for a burr on a speed skate) and two-year-old daughter Brooke, who has a chromosome condition called 1P36 deletion that affects her lungs, hearing and heart.

“Sometimes I just want to take care of my kids and help [Kristi] out,” Boutiette says, “but she reminds me that I need to get out and do what I need to do. It’s hard to see her doing so much. And a lot of people will never know how much this woman does on a daily basis.”

Q&A with KC Boutiette

<http://www.nbcolympics.com/news/qa-kc-boutiette>

How do you pronounce your last name?

Boot-e-aye

What's your family like?

Son Braam (born 6/4/12). It's hard separating from my kids and now that he is getting older he is taking more and more interest in things that I do, which makes me happy because I can share experiences with him. At first he didn't even want to let me carry him on the ice at all, and now after every race we take a lap and we talk about winning and losing and no matter what you do, you do your best.

Daughter Brooke is another story. She has what is called 1p36 deletion and she has been in and out of the hospital for almost 1/4 of her life. She has a nissen because she can't swallow without fluid going into her lungs and is fed through a g-tube that goes directly into her stomach. She is also deaf and we are in the hospital working on a cochlear implant and doing what we can to have her hear. She also had heart surgery at 2 months to close up a couple holes in her heart so she has been through a lot.

My wife Kristi is my rock, though. She does everything for me and keeps me rolling. Sometimes I just want to take care of my kids and help her out, but she reminds me that I need to get out and do what I need to do. It's hard to see her doing so much. And a lot of people will never know how much this woman does on a daily basis. Not only is she the bread winner in our family but she cooks and does everything for all of us all the time. We call her "my sponsor"! Ha!

Last September I had an opportunity to go and train with my pro team in Italy. I questioned it because I wasn't ready to start my season and if I left then I wouldn't be home for longer than 10 days from September through March, but she persuaded me to go because it would be best for me and make me train like a pro. I really love her for helping push me to the reality that if I'm going to do this full time, I need to get away from work and family for a little bit. I did that and the improvements came rather quickly. I was able to focus on me and my fitness rather than some of the other distractions (good distractions) that can drain me.

Now I'm getting ready for the season immediately and trying to get my business in a better place to run a lot smoother with or without me around. I really enjoy working but it does drain me because I put the same focus and drive into my shoes as I do into my training. If I'm home, I work, I train, I do all of the things that athletes in speed skating shouldn't be doing if they want to physically be at their best.

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

I own a custom cycling shoe business, Rocket7. It's hard to run a business and train at the same time. It's hard but I have good people around me who do what they can to help me with my skating. Unfortunately my manager just broke his tibia and now is out for months so things are difficult at the shop at the moment.

Do you have any pets?

We have a couple cats that were strays. We have a big black one who looks like a panther and his name is "Awesome." He was named from everyone at my bike shop and everyone who met him would say, this cat is awesome! So we named him Awesome! Princess is his sister and they still play like they are kittens.

How much time do you spend training each day?

About four hours on average.

What's your typical training day/schedule?

Wake up, eat breakfast, feed Brooke, Braam wakes up, feed him and get him ready for school, go train, try and rest or go straight to work, eat lunch, work, pick up Braam, train, eat, play with kids, sleep.

Not every day is the same but this is typical when I'm home. My wife does a lot of what I say I do but I help when I can.

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

Cycling up some mountains. Sometimes I want to throw my bike off the side!

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

That speed skating is a full-time job in itself. And that it has little to no reward to it and that after you are done competing for your country you have little to no support and pretty much start over. Although the USOC does make attempts to help us after our careers it's still difficult to make the transition.

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

Almost everything I do is experimental because of my age. Some days I switch my program in the morning due to how I feel from previous days.

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

Weightlifting injury to my back that almost kept me out of the 2002 Olympics. I am originally a 1000m / 1500m skater but with my back I needed to change my focus to 5000m. I didn't really get a chance to come back from it because I couldn't get back to 100%.

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

Ice cream almost every single night!

What is your earliest memory of doing or seeing speed skating?

I was a roller skater on quad skates and saw Eric Heiden skate in the 1980 Olympics so I was 10 at the time. I kind of laughed because we skated in loose clothing and they skated in tights. I didn't start skating on the ice until 1993/1994.

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?

In 1996, after skating for one and a half years, I had a great season. I was only racing inlines and I did ice speed skating training for the first time all summer long and the next season I ended up breaking into the top 3 in the 1500m and a 4th in the 5000m. I was on track for a medal in the 1998 Olympics and was a brief holder of the 1500m world record, and then the "clap skates" came out and this threw me out of contention the following season. I worked my way back up to 5th but that wasn't what I was expecting.

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

The warming up and cooling down are time consuming. Some don't need to do it so much but with my old ass I need to do everything to be ready for the next workout.

The hardest part might be that you need to be physically strong and powerful to speed skate. Not many people can make it in this sport in the shorter distances without power so every day we are doing something to improve on this.

The g-forces in the turns are amazing. If your skates are not dialed in, you can lose all control and crash.

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

Tucker Fredricks. We were teammates for many years and now it's cool that he is coaching me. We change my program daily and he is a great guy to be working with.

I also work with Dave Tamburrino when I'm in Milwaukee. He and I were teammates in 94/98 and he has become one of my best friends. He is a great motivator and a special person to have in my corner cheering me on.

Matt Koorman is the national team coach and I work with him on the national circuit. He has skated with me in the past as well and we work well together knowing I change my program daily.

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

Usually my pro team in Holland. Well, most all of the Dutchies. I lived over in Holland for a bit so I'm well known over there.

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

I did. One guy was okay, the other was nuts himself! I heard he went in the nuthouse after the 2002 Games! Man!

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

Moving on from skating. I love it and never wanted to move away from it and was somewhat pulled away from it to pursue owning a bike shop in Miami, which failed terribly!

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

Johan Olav Koss—When I first came over to the ice, I learned how to skate from watching a video of him for almost 10 hours a day to just learn the technique. Not only his skating but what he does off the ice as well.

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

Johan and Eric Heiden. Eric and I have become good buds and I would spend time at his place from time to time and just to know what he does on a daily basis and how laid back this guy is, makes him even more awesome. (Not the cat!) HA!

What advice would you give to a young child just starting out in speed skating?

Love what you are doing and try many different things. Don't let your parents push you into doing something you don't want to do.

Who is your most interesting teammate and why?

Nobody on the team is very interesting other than Brittany Bowe. She is a stud! Basketball and skating and no matter what she does, she's a champ!

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

The best part is when you first get there because everything is new and exciting. Salt Lake City was the best, they had the best food out of the 4 Olympics I went to.

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

Erik Flame was the first one to put the bug in my head to really try coming over to the ice. We were on the same inline team and we raced a 100m race once in the Bronx and he said, well, if you ever come over to the ice I'll coach you. Ever since then I started to purchase equipment and started skating when I could on the ice. So he was the first, but there were many people who helped along the way and way too many to mention. If given the chance I will someday thank everyone personally.

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

Man, my entire career I've been at a disadvantage. I was always the smallest and when skating on the old roller skates, they were so heavy that my little legs could barely lift them up. But I always fought my way through the pack and found a way to win a few here and there.

On the ice, a guy in Southern California told me that I would never make it. This prick was one reason when I started getting good I could throw it in his face. But this prick taught me something in the process: never talk shit to someone if you don't know who they are and or what they are capable of.

Do you have a nickname? Who refers to you by this name?

Booty. Only my good friends.

Do you have any tattoos?

Olympic rings on my inner left ankle, tribal on my upper back.

Do you collect anything?

I'm collecting dust because I'm so old!

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

Taking a nap! Damn! Or go exercise with my wife. Whenever we get a chance we go on bike rides but once our little people came along we don't get to do much together.

How do you unwind after a competition?

Hang out by myself and just reflect either good or bad.

What are your favorite movies?

Dumb and Dumber, Happy Gilmore, Cable Guy, Groundhog Day, Spinal Tap.

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

Um, yeah, I make it up as I go. If I don't know the words this makes it really funny and I dance as I go along. I did Nelly's "Hot in Here" a couple months ago and had a good reception. I also do Culture Club's "Do You Really Want to Hurt Me." Funny stuff!

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

I would love to get a medal. And if I do, I will cut that thing up into small pieces and give a piece to everyone who had a little part of me getting this medal.

ISU Feature Interview: Shani Davis

<https://www.teamusa.org/US-Speedskating/News/Featured-News/2017/June/19/ISU-Feature-Interview-Shani-Davis>

Q What is different where you are now compared to a year ago.

S: I am in way better shape now than I was last season, trained a lot harder, trying to go back to the basics of what made me really special and unique in the beginning of my career, when I had more fitness for all around skating, so I am trying my best to incorporate my all around ideas from way back when into the ideas that I have now about my skating and see it all the way through to 2018 and it's for better or for worse, we have to wait and see.

Q: Do I hear that you want to do all around?

S: I like training for all around, but to go for it, it's kind of difficult, because it takes too much out of my middle distance. And the middle distances are the most competitive so I cannot afford to play around with going too far into the endurance. It is a very fine line that I have to master, so no allrounds. But I like training for them, I do not want to compete in them.

Q: I hear you are in Japan?

S: Yes, I coach now some of the Sankyo skaters. It is a great start for me for after my skating career. I have split the door a bit with coaching, instead of starting from ground zero I have the opportunity to work with it now, but at the same time I have an opportunity to compete and coach. So balancing the two was very challenging but I enjoy it very much.

Q: You coach from the ice?

S: I train with them, I make their program, yea, I do everything, but it is only when we are together. When we're separate we have our communication, but when I'm here I am responsible for them.

Q: And you coach together with someone else or alone?

S: The head coach on paper is Joji, but I am the assistant coach. We kind of share responsibilities, but I get more of it because I have more experience.

Q: Joji Kato? He is a coach?

S: Kind of. He is more skating, not coaching, I am more coaching. I guess that is fair to say.

Q: And you are your own coach as well?

S: Yea, for the most part I am. I do a lot of things on my own, but in the summertime I have a lot of structural from a coach for short track, but when I am on long track I make my own.

Q: All the experience of years come together?

S: Hey, it is pretty good practice!

Q: Do you consider this is really the end of your career skating-wise? Is it like the smooth end slash beginning?

S: No... it would have been smoother if things went the way they should have went in Sochi but since they didn't, you have to kind of rebound and make the best out of the situation that you are facing and I feel like I did that. I weathered the storm, I am one of the last survivors of my generation of skating. And I am still relevant, I'm 13, 14 years of skating at the highest level. And I take great pride and honour in it that I was able to just exist. And of course things could have been better, but they weren't. And hopefully now from my experiences from what I have learned for myself and the things I have been through, I think I can help other skaters not have to go through such highs and lows of skating. More smooth transitions.

Q: But you wouldn't want to have missed the highs...

S: Oh No. Or the downs. I think it completes me as a person. You have to deal with winning and to deal with losing. It's a part of sport. I have an appreciation for all aspects of the game: winning, losing, highs and lows, good times and bad times, it is life. Everything doesn't always go your way and I am really happy that I did as well as I did for as long as I have. I am very proud of it.

Q: What is the highest point in your career?

S: That is a tough one because I have done so much. I would say one of the highest points of my career was winning the World Single Distances here (Heerenveen) in 2015. Against my Olympic rival Stefan Groothuis. It was against all odds, and it was me and him; the Olympic Champion of 2014 versus the Olympic Champion of 2006 and 2010. A packed full house. It was the last time that Thialf was the Thialf. And just let it all out and all was in my favour. I beat a lot of people that probably thought I would never beat them again but I showed them you should never underestimate a champion.

Q: It was all the better because you had been through a low...

S: It was a rough season, it was hard to find motivation to want to skate and train after the upset at the Olympics. But I overcame it, the best I could and I fought valiantly and it is something I am very proud of. I could have easily thought 'forget skating'; I could do other things. I could have easily stayed in depression but I fought back and I didn't allow it to defeat me.

Q: How does your body cope with all the skating over the years?

S: I'm very blessed in terms of health. I haven't had any significant major injuries in my career. I have some bad knees and things like that, but it is not like I have chronic things. Things I can work through: I have dealt with them before and yeah, I am lucky. I put in a lot of training hours over my career but I am still able to do the things I need to do and there is nothing out there that I can't do. I'm very lucky about that. As you get older of course you need more recovery, you have to be smarter in your choices of what you choose and decide to do. I'm learning that as I go along with things. It can be hard, but I do the best I can with it.

Q: As you're from the US, what place does your sport have, how do people perceive you?

S: In America you are all aware that the sport of speed skating doesn't have a very prolific position in life. It is very minor. It is very conditional, because once every four years speed skaters have relevance in America. They remember you if you win, but if you don't win no-one really cares. It is a harsh reality, but I have to remind myself why I love skating as much as I love it and if I think about the reasons why I started skating, which is simply to go fast, or to be as fast as I can be or be the fastest in the world, I don't worry about people knowing about it or accepting what I have done or accomplished. That is not important to me. What is important is that I've made history and my legacy

will be forever. And I will always be remembered by people that love and appreciate skating as one of the greatest. And I'm okay with that.

Q: Your next goal is a good Olympics in Korea?

S: I just want to go there and I want to be prepared. I don't want to have any doubts, any unknown variables, I just want to make sure that I've done everything in my power to be ready. And I want to go there with a good attitude. First I have to qualify of course, and I want to put myself there before it begins, because you never know, you just never know. But I want to go there and I want to try again. I still believe in my heart that I can do it. I think I will be happy if I knew that I gave it my best. And then I could just say 'Ok, Shani, you tried your best and...'

Q: Even if it is fifth?

S: Even if it is fifth. Sure. Because I have been the guy that has won so many races, I've been the guy that was fifth, I've been the guy that has been tenth. I've been last, I don't know, I may have fallen down or something, but I've been all over the map. As long as I knew that I've been there and I've done my best, I'll be happy with fourth place. If I went out there and I kind of did a half job, sure I'd be upset. But honestly, I wouldn't do it if I felt I couldn't do it. Then I would try something else. But you know, that is also tentative on what is going on in this past season. I'm happy that I've been on the podium this season and I think that if I do things right, I can be on the podium again, and I keep on trying. But it's a step in the right direction. And until those steps stop, then I will continue. Once they're done, they are done, and you have to be appreciative of what you are able to do when you are able to do it. That is how I see it.

Q: You seem to be a lot more at peace with yourself.

S: Yes, it took a long time for me to understand how this works in terms of being up and being down, figuring things out. But it starts with being honest with yourself, and if something is really bad, you have to be aware of it. You can't say 'it is good' when it's bad. A lot of people around me would tell me that certain things were good, but they weren't. I don't even think that they know any better. It was just like 'Shani, it looks good, you're coming back', and I would think 'Maybe, but I don't feel it.' You know, it looks good but it doesn't feel good. Now it's starting to feel good. You just got to learn how to choose to listen to the right advice; you have to follow and trust yourself and follow and believe what is in your heart. I think you can do anything. It took me a long time to get used to this because I was used to winning everything and then all of a sudden I wasn't there anymore. And it is not like I didn't train hard or anything. It was just that my body had caught up with me. I can't train the same way I trained at 22 or 26, but I didn't know that. Now I'm learning at 34 that you can be just as strong, just as fast, but you have to be smarter about what you choose and decide to do. I used to do 5000, 500, 1000, 1500, I used to do everything. All-arounds, sprints. And it is great, because it builds a huge base, but you cannot keep on building your base out on the side because you have to start building it coming up, too. So you live and you learn, and I learned a lot, so I'm happy to give that knowledge to my skaters now.

Shani Davis: My Summer Training – And Playing – In Korea

<https://www.teamusa.org/News/2017/November/08/Shani-Davis-My-Summer-Training-And-Playing-In-Korea>

It's time for another blog to fill you in on my offseason training in Korea. Honestly I had plenty of time to write about moving away for 90 days to train but since I wait until the last minute to do everything, and I knew I had a long return flight home (12 hours), I will put some thought and feelings into this blog while returning home...

So we left off at me coming to Korea to train for the summer. Last year I did the same thing and I remember how difficult it was for me and my body to adapt to the training environment. I didn't take pictures of where I lived, but I will try to paint a picture with words for you.

I lived in a small one-room apartment very close to the training university. The room had an air conditioner, thankfully, a stovetop for cooking (last year I didn't have a kitchen) and a bed. It was very basic – a place to rest between skating and training. Some other athletes who lived there prior to me coming left some useful things such as a stretching mat and a foam roller (for massages). I had all the things I needed to dedicate myself to training. I was missing my new gaming laptop and of course fast WiFi so all that gaming and TV streaming was gone from my life. I didn't realize how much of my time those things took up, but here in Korea, training replaced all that and the little time I had remaining went to sleep and recovery.

My days turned into 4-8 hour training sessions, spread out from 7 a.m. through 10 p.m., with the luxury of a day and a half off towards the weekend – like a half day of training Saturday and, if the coach was in a good mood, a full day off on Sunday.

Korea in the summer is very hot and humid. The majority of our off-ice training was outside unless we got a special emergency broadcast over the phone advising not to be outside (which I never actually understood since the broadcast was in Korean). I would be drenched from the sun bearing down on me while in skating position around all these elementary and high school kids.

You are probably thinking that you misread that I was training with middle school and high school kids, but the level of skating here is something unseen anywhere else in the world. Even though the kids are young, their skating abilities are high; in some cases, they're higher than people much older. That's why Korean short trackers are champions at such a young age and due to the higher demand on their bodies they are normally out of the sport in their early- to mid-20s.

Oh, and here I am at 35 years old, being pushed and challenged by people half my age! Granted I hung up my short track career some years ago, but I still like to practice it for my middle-distance fitness and cornering for long track, sticking to my roots. Last year when I came to Korea for training I was in total shock. I remember just in my first week of training I was doing more laps than I did all of the previous summer, and don't forget the off-ice training: running, skating drills, jumping and weight training. I figured since I had some experience from the past season and I somehow survived, how much worse could things get this summer?

The first week this year I didn't do crazy amounts of laps; it was more building into the training. And I was very thankful for that, but once training picked up and the efforts went from 'feel it out' to 'as much as you can,' I knew I was in for a world of trouble. The worst was our endurance days of skating 3,000 meters. The kids would make a game of getting in front of me, so I wouldn't get a good draft off of the bigger skaters and I would struggle because I'm heavier and would sink into the ice unlike the little kids who were so light in weight. They would laugh at my suffering, but in a friendly way. I didn't

take offense; sometimes I would laugh at how ridiculous the workouts got in terms of toughness and seeing these kids just killing it, gliding over the chopped up ice.

I was motivated to do the same, and once I got my wind, I was able to hang with the little dogs! I even got my revenge when I could lead first, and when I was somewhat fresh, I would go extra hard and try to make a strong progressive towards the end. I was just trying to spread the love and return the favor. I really got them when we had to do hill running or endurance running. Since my legs are much longer than theirs, my one stride would be double or triple of theirs, but after my sweet short victory of bullying and picking on the kids we would have skate-position training and again they could get much lower than I and we were back to square one. Hopefully I made it just as difficult for them as they did for me. After all, I believe in equality!!

Another thing I was looking forward to while I was visiting was returning to the water park we went to for a fun day last season. It was a small outdoor water park on a lake and they had obstacle courses, water slides and boat rides. I think I had the most fun being there, running around and throwing the kids off of rafts, or being the king of the mountain. We had life vests so it was all in good fun – until I injured myself on one of the slides. The slide was a big air cushion and people would go to the front of the cushion and others would jump onto the end of the cushion, sending the person in the front flying into space and crashing down hard in the water.

All the kids would want me to jump on the end since I was heavy and I could get them higher, so I would, but one time I was getting off the slide and I caught my toe on a hook. For almost a month, I had the worst foot pain in my small toe. I think it was a blessing since it got me rest from training, but I was quite worried at the time it was something serious.

After all the playing, we had a traditional Korean BBQ meal. The parents brought out this huge smoker and cooked samgyupsal (pork belly) and other dishes I can't spell, and before leaving we had another free-for-all water wrestling competition. I ended up wrestling another skater there who was close to my age and we both wouldn't give up. After about 10 or so minutes of giving it my all to toss this guy off the side of the raft, he scooped me up and threw me in. I was hoping there wasn't video of this since my pride was on the line, but there is and let's just say I lost because of my injured toe!!

There are a lot of stories of my time in Korea, but these are the ones I remember the most. I also snuck away for one night out in Itaewon but that's not for sharing. It was one of the best nights I had while in Korea and next time I come back I definitely have to go back. Enjoy these stories and we will talk again soon because now it is time for me to transition into the world of long track! Wish me luck and thanks for listening!!

Until next time,

Shani

Speed skating in her own backyard

<http://www.easttexasmatters.com/winter-sports/going-for-the-gold/speed-skating-in-her-own-backyard/819170735>

KEARNS, Ut. (NEXSTAR) – Olympic athletes devote their lives to the sport they choose. But for some, the sport chooses them.

That's the case for Jerica Tandiman, a long track speed skater hoping to compete with Team USA in the PyeongChang 2018 Olympics.

Growing up, Tandiman watched her future rise in her backyard.

"I just lived across the fields, and I got to watch the building be built," Tandiman said of the Utah Olympic Oval in Kearns, where she now practices every day.

Tandiman's introduction to elite athletes came early. After the rink was completed in 2001, her parents took her to watch the speed skaters. Then, the next year, she remembers watching the torch come through on its way to the Games in Salt Lake City.

"I don't really know if I understood at the time, but I do remember watching the training sessions and being just super fascinated with how fast everyone was going," Tandiman said.

After the Olympics, Tandiman's mom signed her up for lessons.

"I was always a super competitive child and wanted to race people and beat everyone."

That competitive spirit began to pay off. Eight years later, as a teenager, she got her first gold medal at the American Cup 2.

Since then, she's been pushing her limit physically and mentally, working to be the best.

"You get to that point in your mind, like, 'I can't do this, how can I do another set, how can I do another rep?'" she said. "But when you push through that feeling at the end, it's like 'I really can do it, if I get my mind right, my body can do more than I think.'"

When practice gets particularly tiring and frustrating, Tandiman digs deep into her past.

"I always look back and remember my seven-year-old self and what got me into this sport and why I love it so much," she said. "I'm really lucky for all that I've had."

In 2018, she'll be hoping for even more, including a place on Team USA when she heads to the Olympic Trials in early January.

Q&A with Brittany Bowe

<http://wwlp.com/2017/07/27/qa-with-brittany-bowe/>

What's your family like?

Mother and father have been in the education system for 30+ years. Mother is currently the Dean of Student Success at the College of Central Florida (Ocala, FL) and Father is a high school teacher and basketball coach at Dixie Hollins (St. Petersburg, FL). My sister currently lives in Atlanta, GA and is involved in the performance industry as a professional dancer and choreographer.

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

My father has been a high school basketball, football, and track coach for 25+ years, and for as long as I can remember, I was either in the gym, on the field, or on the track with him. He resigned from his basketball coaching position when I got to high school so he could attend my games. When my school got word of this, they immediately hired him, and I had the honor to play for my dad throughout my high school basketball career. Because of both of my parents' backgrounds, sports, education, and faith have been the center of my and my sister's lives.

Do you have any pets?

I do not have any pets of my own but we have two cats back home at my mom's house in Ocala, FL. Their names are Chloe and Patches. Chloe is a special needs cat (deaf and balance problems). I'm definitely a CAT WOMAN!

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

I love spending time in Florida's natural wonders, kayaking, swimming, and enjoying the sun: Silver Springs, Salt Springs, Crystal River, & Devil's Den are all within 40 minutes of Ocala and ALL MUST SEE LOCATIONS!

A few hours outside of Ocala is St. Augustine. My godparents own a beach house just south of the city and it is one my favorite places in the world to unwind and relax.

FOOD: Some of the best wings and fries I've ever had are right in Ocala at Crunchies & Munchies. I think it should be a candidate for "Diners, Drive-Ins, and Dives"!

What's your music of choice while training?

Electronic music—Adventure Club's Superhero Anonymous mixtapes are always on my iPod along with almost anything from Seven Lions, Bassnectar, Sub Focus, and Above and Beyond.

How much time do you spend training each day?

4-6 hours

What's your typical training schedule?

May to August is pre-season training. Spend a lot of time on the bike, in the weight room and building strength in skating position through off-skate exercises.

August to November is more skating specific, building strength in the skating position on ice and pushing the lactate threshold.

November to March we are in our competition season and while we are still training hard, the focus is to be fresh for certain competitions and peaking in February at the Olympics!

What is your favorite workout or fitness trend?

I love going back to my roots and getting back on my inline skates for fitness.

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

My coach puts us through some pretty grueling interval workouts on the ice. The lactic acid that you can build on the ice is like no other pain I have felt.

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

Although the Olympics is the pinnacle sporting event of the world, the training and preparation is no different than races we prepare for "the other 3 years". Training for the Olympics requires a focused, dedicated, and passionate train of thought so you are prepared to perform when the pressure is at an all-time high.

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

Together with Under Armour and Specialized, we do extensive wind tunnel testing on our racing suits.

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

At the end of last summer, I collided with my teammate during training and suffered a concussion. What I thought would be a few weeks recovery time has turned into 8 months—as I sit here writing this response from Colorado Springs at the Olympic Training Center receiving care for my condition. I have been struggling with post-concussive syndrome for months, which has caused vast vestibular issues and autonomic dysfunction. I was diagnosed with POTS in October and have been struggling with blood pressure issues and fainting episodes ever since. I am now under the care of a team of doctors in Colorado and this will be home until I am back to full health.

I tried to make something of my season this year—juggling rehab and training in hopes of competing at the World Championships and defending my World Sprint title. I was able to lace my skates up for one competition this past year, where I earned a bronze medal in the 1000m—the first and only 1000m I was able to skate this past year.

That really boosted my confidence and I thought I was "over the hump" in my recovery process. Little did I know, I was to prepare for the worst yet. The day before US Nationals, I had a vertigo attack in the middle of the night that led to a fainting episode. I was unable to compete at Nationals and made the tough decision to step away for the remainder of the season to focus on my health.

This has turned into a very complex case and a constant uphill battle to recovery but I am doing everything in my power to get back to full health, back to the starting line, and back to the top of the podium.

What is your earliest memory of doing or seeing skating?

My earliest memory of seeing my sport was in 2002 at the Salt Lake City Olympics. My inline skating coach, Renee Hildebrand, and I went to SLC to watch the Olympics together. I remember seeing Derek [Parra], Joey [Cheek], Chris [Witty], Jenn [Rodriguez], and Apolo [Ohno] win their medals.

For as long as I can remember, my dream has always been to be an Olympian. It wasn't until watching the 2010 Winter Games that I realistically could drop everything and pursue my dream. It was my last semester of college—I was sitting on the couch with my roommate watching some of my friends and competitors from the inline world walking in the Opening Ceremony, racing, and standing on the podium.

At this time, my college basketball coach was helping me find an agent to pursue a professional basketball career. I had a meeting with my coach soon after and told her that I'd decided to set my basketball career aside and I was going to move to SLC and become an Olympian.

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 can't think of a specific breakthrough moment when I realized I could compete in my sport at a high enough level to reach the Olympics—but it was in 2013 at the World Championships/Test Event for Sochi where I earned my first world medal (bronze) in the 1000m (less than 3 years on the ice) when I realized I could compete with the best in the world and really had a shot to do something special with my career.

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

I'm not sure what people think about the racing suits that we wear but they may not realize that we are racing in a VERY tight, rubber suit.

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

Matt Kooreman. We have been working together since the summer of 2014. We have a great relationship/understanding, respectful of one another. He has really helped me get my skating to the highest level—not by something magical, but keeping it simple, keeping it focused, and plain ol' hard work!

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

My teammates are like family to me. If there's a moment where I want to go out for a coffee, dinner, hike, or just hang out, my teammates are the first on my list to call.

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

"Don't overskate."

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

Currently trying to overcome a concussion, which has now been a nine month recovery process.

What is your biggest fear when competing?

I wouldn't call it a fear, but in the overall "big picture," the thought of not achieving what I've set out to do is scary.

Who is your Olympic role model?

Bonnie Blair.

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

My two biggest influences have been the two coaches I've had to date, Ryan Shimabukuro and Matt Kooreman. These two coaches have given me the tools, coaching, direction, and confidence I need to be where I am today. I feel very blessed to have had these two coaches and I'm forever grateful for the sacrifices they have made for me and my teammates throughout the years.

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

The first name that comes to mind is Dan Jansen. His story is beyond inspiring and he defines the phrase "never give up". From going into the 1988 Winter Games as World Sprint Champion and a favorite to win Olympic medals, to hearing of his sister's death during the Games, to falling in two races at the Games. Fast forward to the 1992 Games, and he again comes home medal-less. In 1994 he captures the World Sprint Championship title again and heads to the Olympics for one final try at a medal. After falling short of a medal in the 500m, he goes to the line for the last time. Not only did DJ win his first and only Olympic medal of his career, he set a new world record in the process. Dan's story is inspiring to me because he knew what it felt like to be the best, to be the world champion, yet he fell short of the ultimate prize on a few occasions. He was faced with the loss of his sister, faced with defeat, yet he didn't give up.

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

HAVE FUN! Work hard, stay focused, but HAVE FUN!

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

Fellow American Heather Richardson. It's a friendly rivalry. Heather and I have known each other since we were young, racing on inline skates. Heather has set the bar high year after year and we continue to battle one another, pushing the boundaries on speed and lowering world record times year after year. When it's time to race, we are both battling for the same prize—but what's nice about long track speed skating is, whoever is the fastest that day wins. No questions asked—it's you vs. the clock.

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

I have some close friends in Holland that I've met through and competed against on the World Cup circuit. I have a ton of respect for South Korean Lee Sang-Hwa, who is the current world record holder in the 500m. I know the arena will be booming when she gets to the start line. The first Olympic race of my career in Sochi, I was paired with her in the 500m—let's just say that was a pretty intimidating race for me. I would like to have the opportunity to try that again this time around in Korea. Are you a fan of any other sports, or any particular athletes or teams you follow?

NFL. I'm more of a collegiate sports fan but since I'm now an avid fantasy football player, I follow every team I have a player playing for. I went to college with Alfred Morris so I'm definitely a fan of his. I have his Redskins jersey, I guess I need to get his Cowboys jersey now.

Do you play any other sports?

Former Division I basketball player—point guard. I play when I can.

Which Summer Olympic sport would you like to try?

I would definitely like to be on the U.S. women's basketball team.

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

First and foremost, my family. My mom and dad have sacrificed so much so that my sister and I could and currently can chase our dreams.

How and where do you train over the summer?

I train in Salt Lake City. Summer training is full of base building/cardio building/strength building. We are putting a lot of miles in on the bike, sweating a lot in the weight room, and the summer time gives me a chance to put my inline skates on and log some good miles there.

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

In the “world” of athletes, it is pretty special to have full access to the facility and staff at the Olympic Training Center in Colorado Springs.

What are your pre-competition rituals?

I usually get to the rink about 3 hours before my race. I will warm up off skates for about 45 minutes, get on the ice for a 20 minute skate, cool down, relax, and refocus. About an hour before the gun is scheduled to go off before my race, I will start my pre-race warmup routine, put my race suit on, and head out to center ice 15 minutes before the gun goes off. I will do my final preparations, lace my skates up, and go!

Do you have a lucky charm that you can't compete without?

I always have my grandmother's rosary in my backpack.

Do you have a nickname?

BBowe. My inline skating coach was the first one to call me BBowe when I was young and it has stuck around ever since.

Do you have any tattoos?

I have a stairway to heaven along the right side of my body. I have my grandmother's rosary wrapped around my hands in the piece. I have an Owl on the inside of my left arm—yes, Florida Atlantic University's alma mater is The Owls—but, I just like it.

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

Panda. I have seen a panda in a zoo from behind the glass but I would LOVE to play with baby panda bears. The number of panda bear zoo keeper videos on the internet make me so jealous!

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

Right to Play. I became involved with Right to Play because of the involvement that Olympic champion Joey Cheek has in it. After donating his Olympic medal money to Right to Play in 2006, I read about the organization and knew I would love to be a part of it someday.

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

Oh my gosh, I have no idea! Being an athlete is in my blood. I've never been as passionate for anything else like I am with sport. Mission work is always something I have talked about doing—I hope that through athletics, I can create a platform to inspire and help others.

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

A perfect day off would entail a lot of time outdoors—whether it be by the water, hiking, or hanging out at a park. A good cup of coffee and a cafe would definitely be included.

How do you unwind after a competition?

Usually just hang out with family if they are able to be there or just enjoy a nice dinner and go to sleep!

Do you have any fears?

Spiders and snakes... those are probably the top two on my list!

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

I love to travel. One of the most memorable travel moments was a trip to Barcelona, Spain last year after winning my World Sprint Title. I was in Holland, visiting my girlfriend, before the last World Cup of the season. We had a few days off of training and she surprised me with a trip to Barcelona. It was my first time there and I can't wait to go back!

What's your personal motto?

Something that has stuck with me ever since I was little, that my inline coach Renee Hildebrand used to always tell us, is practice doesn't make perfect. Perfect practice makes perfect.

What are some of your hobbies?

When I'm home in Florida, I love going to the natural springs that are around the area. I love kayaking through the rivers and enjoy the relaxing, quiet, beauty that is around me. Being outside is relaxing, whether it's at the springs, on the beach, in the mountains of Utah, or simply at the park, those are all hobbies of mine.

What are your favorite TV shows?

This is Us, Fixer Upper, Chopped

What are your favorite movies?

I'm all across the board with this one, from The Imitation Game to The Blind Side, Chef, Mad Money and Zootopia.

What are your top five beauty/grooming products?

Bare Minerals makeup, Degree Motion Sense deodorant, Philips Sonicare toothbrush, Dr. Organic Tea Tree toothpaste, EOS chapstick

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

Power Yoga

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

Water bottle, USANA (single serve) Nutrimeal Meal Replacement pack, Degree Motion Sense deodorant, iPod shuffle, EOS chapstick

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. The hospitality has always been top notch during my trips to South Korea. Anything I want to see/do? Yes, I want to see my flag raised and sing my national anthem!

Do you like kimchi or any other Korean foods?

YES! Kimchi and Korean BBQ

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

Yes, the first place I ever did karaoke was in South Korea during an inline skating World Cup many years ago. Singing isn't really one of my talents, I don't have a go-to song. Maybe something by Destiny's Child.

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

My goal is to stand on top of that Olympic podium, watch the American flag raised, and sing my national anthem.

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?

No, Olympic Trials will be the focus around the holiday season. After trials we will have a recovery week before heading into our pre-Olympic training camp. It is then that I will go home to Florida for a few days to recover under the FL sunshine.

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

Haven't even thought about it! The past few years my mom and sister have come out to SLC to spend Christmas together—it would be nice to keep that tradition alive. The best holiday gift for an athlete in my sport would have to be a spot on the Olympic Team. I guess that's #1 on my list too!

Brittany Bowe Getting Back On Track On Speed Skating Oval

<https://www.teamusa.org/US-Speedskating/News/Featured-News/2017/September/18/Brittany-Bowe-Getting-Back-On-Track-On-Speed-Skating-Oval>

MILWAUKEE — Health problems forced Brittany Bowe to step away from the speedskating oval, a decision that the former world champion described as one of the toughest that she's had to make in her life.

Concussion symptoms that started after a crash on the ice last summer are becoming less frequent. Bowe is happy and encouraged that her health is back on track.

Through the challenging times, Bowe said she has never lost focus on her ultimate goal — winning Olympic gold. Training is starting to ramp up with the Winter Games in South Korea coming up in February.

"We're definitely out for redemption," Bowe said on Friday at the Pettit National Ice Center. Some of the country's top skaters are wrapping up a two-week training camp at the site of the U.S. Olympic long track trials in January.

There is plenty of room for improvement after Team USA was shutout at the Sochi Olympics in 2014. Americans failed to finish higher than sixth in a long-track event, and Bowe was one of the top hopefuls.

The program has won more medals than any other U.S. winter sport and had not missed the podium at the Winter Games since 1984.

"I have felt that sense of pride and that sense of victory. So to be deflated and feel defeated ... it was one of the most upsetting moments, if not the most upsetting moment, of my athletic career," the 29 year-old Bowe said.

She went home to Florida for a few months and relaxed before getting back on the ice.

Bowe followed up with quite a season. She won her second consecutive overall gold in the 2015-16 World Sprint championships, taking 20 medals and 10 individual golds that season.

Then a collision with a teammate in July 2016 led to the concussions symptoms and what Bowe calls "the longest 14 months of my life." Bowe said she did not realize the severity of the injury right away, but kept experiencing dizziness along with fainting and trouble sleeping.

She did skate in one World Cup event in December, when she was encouraged by winning bronze in the 1,000 meters. Bowe thought she was over the concussion symptoms.

"Then I went back to Salt Lake (City) a few weeks after and I had another fainting episode at skate trials," Bowe said. "At that point, I decided, 'Look, I've got to get healthy before I'm a speedskater.'"

Bowe stepped away for from the season for good in February to focus on her health. "It was probably the hardest decision of my life, but definitely the smartest to do," she said.

Slowly, Bowe is getting better. She said she had been symptom-free the past few weeks, and remains under close monitoring by doctors and the coaching staff. Bowe has made some

modifications in her routine, like taking a little more time between interval training to let her heart rate come down, "let the system recover before I push it again," she said.

One test comes on Saturday when the first time trial of the year wraps up the stay in Milwaukee. World Cup events begin in November, and the long track trials return to the Pettit in January.

U.S skaters know that there will be continue to be questions leading up to Korea about the United States' dismal showing in Sochi and what needs to be done to bounce back. A self-assessment by U.S. Speedskating in 2014 confirmed issues that were already suspected, including a lack of familiarity with new high-tech suits and a decision to hold a pre-Olympic camp at an outdoor rink in Italy.

This time, the plan is to train again indoors at sea level in Milwaukee before leaving for Korea.

Joey Mantia, who also competed in 2014, said the biggest lessons learned were to stay positive and to stick with routine.

"For me personally, it got me a little out of my element" Mantia said. "I think the biggest lesson learned was to go with what you know. We've all won before, we've all been on the podium and done things that we need to at the Olympics to win. We just need to repeat that."

How Brittany Bowe Finds Balance In The Fast Lane Of The Olympic Life

<https://www.teamusa.org/News/2017/November/06/How-Brittany-Bowe-Finds-Balance-In-The-Fast-Lane-Of-The-Olympic-Life>

As athletes, it is easy to become consumed in training; after all, that is what we are here to do. Each day matters and everything we do counts. I feel very fortunate to be a part of a team (the US Speedskating Long Track National Team) where everyone is deliberate in executing great training sessions and brings focus to each workout. Over the past four years, we have grown into a family — we know each other's strengths, weaknesses and what each person can bring to the table. In addition to all of the hard work that we put in during training, I believe our team is successful because of the balance we exude. Yes, our sport requires a great deal of balance on the ice, but the balance that I am speaking about lies within our lifestyles. The life of an Olympic athlete can become a stressful one — day in and day out you are training and competing at the highest level. It can become a very cutthroat atmosphere, especially as the countdown to the Olympic Games is on. When faced with a challenge — whether it be facing an injury, struggling to make technical gains or securing your spot on the world cup (or, in this year's case, Olympic) team — it seems like the clock begins to tick faster and faster. I think everyone can relate to this no matter where their workplace may be — when an important deadline or event approaches, you want to feel prepared, confident and healthy.

Of course this is just my opinion, but it is the balance between life inside and outside of the skating rink that leads to happiness and success. Over the course of the summer, my teammates and I put in hard work on the bike, in the weight room and on the ice. We have pushed each other to new limits and have raised our level of fitness and skating. We have also shared many moments off the ice together that are priceless.

Some of my greatest memories from this summer are with my teammates, who feel like family. Based in Salt Lake City, the national team is spoiled with a backyard full of mountains and trails, and when time allows, that is where you'll find us. Living in a world and training environment that is so fast-paced, stepping outside and slowing things down helps me recover mentally. Camping, hiking and being on the water are a few things that bring balance and calmness to me both physically and mentally.

On one hand, being an Olympic athlete has pushed me past the limits that I thought were possible, both physically and mentally. On the other hand, it has shown me the importance of slowing things down, which has really made me appreciate and enjoy the natural beauty of the place I currently call home. Whether it's a night spent under the starlit sky of the High Uintas or soaking in natural hot springs, finding ways to relax and unwind play an important role in my training, in my recovery and in my life.

Q&A with Mia Manganello

<http://www.nbcolympics.com/news/qa-mia-manganello>

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

My parents are the sole reason I am where I am today. They have completely dedicated their lives to making sure I have every opportunity to become the best in whatever I have chosen to do. They have gone as far as to uprooting their lives not only once but twice. First being within the state of Florida and the second being all the way across the country.

They have also supported me financially so that I have been able to dedicate myself to the fullest in chasing the Olympic dream. I do what I do because I love it but deep down I do it to make them proud and make all their sacrifices worth it. I will never be able to thank them enough, but making the team will be pretty close.

Do you have any pets?

I currently am petless but the day I retire getting a dog will be one of the first things I do. The training and traveling schedule we have as professional athletes doesn't make for the best living environment for a pet.

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

The number one place for me when I get to visit home is my parents Italian restaurant, Dominic's Pizzeria in Valparaiso, FL just 20 minutes outside my home town. My parents have had an Italian restaurant for the majority of my life. Growing up in restaurant was an amazing thing. Not only was I able to eat as much pizza as I could consume, but I also was taught the insides of a business. I would spend hours in the kitchen and even waiting tables and running the register. Life lessons were made in the restaurant and I would not change it for anything. The kitchen will forever feel like home. The only other must-do when I go home is visit the beaches. Fort Walton Beach and Destin have some of the most beautiful beaches and the softest white sand. The waves crashing against the shore and a salty breeze are all I need for relaxation.

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

Typically it's around 7:15am but some days can be around 5:15am when I get to train with the short trackers.

Sleeping is everything in sport but aside from night sleep I try to get home between training sessions to relax and possibly get a 20-30 minute nap in.

How much time do you spend training each day?

Anywhere from 2-6 hours a day. This depends on the necessary training for the day.

What's your typical training day/schedule?

No two days are the same in a week of training for me but for an average of them may look a bit like this:

7:15 Wake Up and get some grub

8:15 Arrive at the [Utah Olympic] Oval for morning training

2-3 hrs of training

12:00 Cool down, start recovery and preparation for the second practice.

12:30-1 Arrive at home to relax and possibly a nap

2:00 Head back to the oval for round 2

2-3 hours of training followed by cool down and recovery to prepare for tomorrow's training

5-5:30 Get back home, clean up and start preparing dinner.

9:00 Start focusing on tomorrow's training and getting everything ready for the morning practice.

10:00 Bed

How do you work to achieve your daily goals?

Never lose focus of why I'm here. I lost sight of that once and have promised myself to never lose sight again.

What is your favorite workout or fitness trend?

Right now I love them all, because I know no matter how simple or grueling a workout may be it helps me get one step closer to the Olympics.

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

Well after taking 6 years off everything is pretty much experimental. Last year was my first season back and I pretty much just jumped in after my cycling racing season and started skating. So I had a great base built up from riding but not a lot of skating specific strength. I decided to not race this summer on the bike to avoid any possible injuries and focus more on the skating specific training. It's been interesting to try and figure out how to get my base back up to the level I need without racing and fitting in as much skating as possible as well. I very happy with how everything is going so far and can't wait to put all this hard work to the test.

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

I tend to not eat too much during training, for me my energy is provided from meals prior to the workout. Coming back from training for cycling I've had to change my idea of nutrition. With cycling I was taking in more fats that would help and be burned in the more endurance training needed for the sport but with skating it's all intensity so I've had to drop most of the fats and bring in more carbs, which I'm not too upset about haha.

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

Pizza, forever and always.

What is your earliest memory of doing or seeing skating?

I grew up in a skating family but instead of ice it was on wheels, which means I was skating when I was still in diapers. I didn't start ice skating till I was 13 years old. So in one form or another I've been skating my whole life. When I was younger, I tried other sports such as gymnastics and tennis but never seemed to last because I would choose skating over them all. When I was 13 I attended a intro to speed skating class in Salt Lake City and absolutely fell in love. I love the technical challenge and brute strength of the sport along with the beauty and grace of gliding across the ice. I've always been raised to be the best you can be at whatever it is you choose to do. Luckily I have parents that have given me the opportunities to do just that with a sport I love.

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

I don't really have a specific moment from watching the Olympics that has driven me to get to this point. I think it more is from the determination I have to be the best and making the Olympics and performing well there is the top of the ladder. So that where I want to be.

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?

When I started ice speed skating at 13 the dream of the Olympics was, of course, there but I had a lot of work to be done. I continued to train and compete as a junior doing pretty well. When I was 16 I joined the U.S. National Team and started training with people I had admired, past and sure to be future Olympians. I knew at that moment this dream could really come true. In 2008 we got a new coach that changed the way I trained and looked at the sport, all for the better. I improved so much that year and was only looking to get better going into the Olympic year of 2010.

When he was fired the next season my mind and body tired into a mess. I was lost with my training, unsure what to do with my coaching with such an important year ahead. Once Olympic Trials came I was nowhere near my potential and failed to complete the long lived dream of making the Olympics. I "retired" at the age of 20.

For the next 6 years I took up cycling and raced on the professional calendar. In the fall of 2015 I decided to visit the ice again just to have a little fun. When I took my first couple laps on the ice I was in absolute heaven and knew I was exactly where I always should of been. I went back that winter and competed at U.S. Nationals where I set a new personal best time by 4 seconds and became national champion [in the 3000m]. I was hooked and knew from that moment I had so much more to give in this sport and this was the time to do it.

I competed on the road for cycling in the summer of 2016 and could only think about getting back on the ice that fall. Last season was the season of my dreams, skating faster than I ever believed I was capable of and knowing I can go faster. Leaving the sport was the smartest thing I could have done. I was able to mature as a women and athlete and bring a whole new perspective on athletics and the sport of speed skating. Before I did it because it was what I did and had done for so long, I would go day to day doing just enough to complete the workout. Now I'm here because I choose to be. I never do just enough because I have unfinished business to take care of.

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

I feel the hardest part of speed skating is the technique. You can have the strongest body and mind but if you're not technically sound it will be very difficult to reach the highest level of this sport.

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

Tom Cushman is my coach and the coach of the U.S. National All-round Team. We have been working together since I returned to the sport last winter.

What is your biggest fear when competing?

Not performing to my potential.

What advice would you give to a young child just starting out in speed skating?

Always remember to have fun.

Are you superstitious?

I don't believe in rituals or good luck charms. I was told once it's wise to not have anything like this so that you are not reliant on them. You don't want to have the excuse that you performed poorly because you weren't able to complete a ritual or didn't have your lucky charm. I believe that you and only you determine your fate.

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

There are two options:

1. Never getting out of my PJ's and watching Netflix all day.
2. Getting dressed up (just wearing heels is dressed up for me) go to 3Cups and have a matcha latte. Then run all my errands. Getting errands done is very satisfying but then dressing up is also nice because as an athlete I don't get to do it that often. It's nice to feel like a woman every now and then.

How do you unwind after a competition?

Eat pizza.

Do you have any fears?

Ugh!!! Not good with squirmy things.

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

I am grateful for the places speed skating has taken me and the opportunities I have to see the world. My favorite place I've ever been is Japan. The heritage and honor they carry with them and continue to show in their country is amazing to see and witness. Plus the food is amazing!!!!

What are some of your hobbies?

I enjoy gardening... Well, does taking care of potted flowers count? My boyfriend and I potted flowers this spring and taking care of them has been surprisingly rewarding and satisfying. This is the first time in my life I've done something like this and now definitely won't be my last.

My greatest passion aside from skating is cooking. I love all types of cuisine but my favorite would have to be pastries/desserts. I would love to create wedding cakes one day or maybe have my own pastry shop. I have a huge sweet tooth.

What are your personal care indulgences?

My most frequent thing would probably be getting my nails done. I always have mine painted. Other than that and on a day-to-day basis I'm pretty low maintenance.

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

Cycling for sure. It's an awesome workout and gives you the opportunity to see things you may not have seen before.

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

Weight shoes
Water bottle
Roll of KT Tape
Snack, usually a bar or fruit
Towel, things tend to get pretty sweaty.

Have you been to South Korea before? What are you most looking forward to about the Games being hosted in South Korea?

I have been once before and that was for the Single Distance World Championships held at the Olympic venue.

This will be my first Olympic Games so I've frigin excited about the whole thing. I have no doubt they are going to do an amazing job creating the Olympic spirit but with the venue pretty much on the coast it's going to make for some beautiful scenery.

Do you like kimchi or any other Korean foods?

Korean BBQ!!!!

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

I want every race to be the best I've ever skated it. Of course I want that to be good enough to put me on the podium, but if it doesn't I want to cross the line knowing I left it all out on the ice.

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?

The winter holidays fall in a less opportune time. We have our last World Cup mid-December and then only three weeks later we are competing for the Olympic team [at Trials, held January 2-7, 2018]. So more than likely I will be in Salt Lake City spending it quietly with my boyfriend, Craig.

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

To make my first Winter Olympic Team the following week!!!

Olympic Hopeful Mia Manganello Discusses Her Career As A Speed Skater And Cyclist

<https://www.teamusa.org/US-Speedskating/News/Featured-News/2017/August/14/Olympic-Hopeful-Mia-Manganello-Discusses-Her-Career-As-A-Speed-Skater-And-Cyclist>

There's a strong argument that if it wasn't for speed skating, US professional cycling would be a long way behind where it is right now. The legendary Seven-11 team – the bed rock of US pro cycling - was founded by a certain Jim Ochowicz – who came from the ice – and his big draw card for sponsorship was a gentleman with unfeasibly large thighs named Eric Heiden, winner of five speed skating gold medals at the 1980 Lake Placid Winter Olympics and an American sporting Legend. Continuing the tradition is Mia Manganello; she started on the ice, came to cycling, is now going back on the ice with Olympic glory in mind but might yet trade her skates for cleats again in the future. Here's her tale. . .

PEZ: You're from Florida, did you get into skating there?

I've done some form of skating my whole life. I basically grew up in a roller rink. Both my parents were competitive roller speed skaters which helped me get going on wheels. I started racing in line skates when I was eight years-old and competed till 13 years-old. When I was 12 my father and I attended a 'learn to speed skate camp' in Salt Lake City and I absolutely fell in love. On our two day drive home we called mom, who was back home in Florida, and told her I was in love and this is what I was meant to do. I was going to be an Olympian. My dad and I were half joking until we got home and mom had the entire living room packed and making her way to the kitchen. About a month later we had our RV loaded up and we were driving across the country to follow my dreams. We arrived in Salt Lake City on my 13th birthday and my journey to become an Olympian had begun.

PEZ: 13 years-of-age is pretty young to get seriously into a sport.

I have always been a pretty dedicated and self driven person so to me it wasn't a big deal. Plus having parents who never held me back and always gave me all the love and support I needed to accomplish anything, age was just a number.

PEZ: How does cycling fit into skate training?

I would say, especially for an endurance speed skater, cycling is one of the most important cross training tools. I started cycling to cross train for speed skating when I was 13 years-old. It uses very similar muscle groups and helps you build your endurance to it's fullest potential.

PEZ: You quit the ice at just 20, why?

I was burnt out, more mentally then physically. I had a really bad year with my coach of two years being fired and having some of the worst skating of my life at the 2010 Olympic Trials. It only took about a month until it sunk in and I started feeling regret, sadness, guilt. I had just walked away from something that not only myself but my entire family devoted so much to. I knew I had so much more to give the sport, so much more potential within me and I just walked away.

I dealt with these feeling off and on for the next six years. I started up cycling a year after stepping away from the ice. This helped mask these feelings and gave me that competitiveness and drive that I missed from being an athlete my whole life. Cycling may have started as just something to fill a void but ended up becoming a sport that I love and admire, a sport that will forever be a part of me. When asked the question you asked me, I tend to use the word 'regret.' "*I regretted quitting.*" I try to stop myself from saying it because you can't regret something that you learned from or became a better

person from. Taking these last six years away from the ice is my secret weapon. The new perspective I have on life and this sport has brought me to a level I never thought I was capable of.

PEZ: Were you full time on the bike - how did it go?

For the past five years I have been a full time competitive cyclist. It was an absolute blast developing into a cyclist. In my last two years of racing I took on a new coach and really started to see gains. I was able to earn the green "Sprinters" jersey at the San Dimas Stage Race, Redlands Classic and my favorite Cascade Classic. I grew to really love the sport of cycling. I'm grateful for all it's taught me on and off the bike. It's helped me grow as a person and as an athlete. For that it will always have a place in my heart.

PEZ: Was there any skating in your bike training?

No, not at all. Although I'm sure it's wouldn't hurt it just wasn't a part of my training.

PEZ: Tell us about the 'Visit Dallas' team, it sounds interesting.

What an amazing team! The majority of my cycling career was racing for the Visit Dallas DNA Cycling Team, so that's gotta say something. When I started with the team we were known as FCS Cycling, The Foundation for the Cultivation of Sport. It was owned and created by a man who has been supporting so many women trying to get into the sport of cycling, Lee Whaley. We were directed by Scott Warren, whom if it weren't for I wouldn't have had the opportunities or success within my career. Scott noticed me at one of my first National Calendar races and seeing potential he asked to sign me the following year. These two men have been my rocks during my cycling career and I am so grateful to have them in my life.

PEZ: But you're back on the ice - why now?

Since the moment I left speed skating in 2010 I was unhappy not accomplishing my dreams or reaching what I knew was my full potential. But until the fall of 2016 I didn't have the guts to go back. So with the help of a dear friend I gained the confidence to give it another try. I was the fittest I'd ever been in my life due to cycling and after testing it out one weekend and the techniques somewhat falling back into place I thought, "*it's now or never*".

PEZ: What's your event on the ice, long track?

Yes, I compete on the long track. My disciplines are the 1500m, 3000m, 5000m, Mass Start and Team Pursuit.

PEZ: How big a sport is skating in the US?

Unfortunately not big at all. We as speed skaters and the US Speed Skating organization are doing our best to gain followers and potential participants in the sport of speed skating. It makes it difficult to compete against the world when their talent pools are so much greater than ours. Speed skating is such a beautiful and rewarding sport. The combination of power, strength and grace makes speed skating the fastest human powered sport in the world. I urge everyone to go out and give it a try.

PEZ: Where are you based - tell us about your training.

I currently live in Salt Lake City training at the Utah Olympic Oval with the US National Team. I've been back here for a year now and with the coaching and facilities we have available to us there is

nowhere else I'd rather be. Like cycling we have our "off season" training or "summer training". This is where the majority of our base and strength are built. It's mainly comprised of cycling, weights room training and specific technical work in the skating position. This is very important time in our season because once the racing season begins there are very few opportunities to build on these aspects.

PEZ: Are The Netherlands and Scandinavia still skating heartlands?

Oh yes, of course. Holland will forever be the heart of speed skating. It's amazing to go over there and compete. The love and passion everyone has for speed skating is breath taking. With sold out arenas the crowd roars not only for their own country but for every speed skater that steps to the line. If we could get just one-tenth of that passion here in the states maybe we'd have more speed skaters.

PEZ: The Winer Olympics PyeongChang 2018 - is that the big goal?

That's the only goal.

PEZ: Will we see you back in the peloton after The Olympics?

I definitely miss racing my bike. There's nothing like the rush of being in a field of women 60 to 100 strong. Bumping and grinding through a crit or handling switchbacks down a step decent. I can't say I won't be back but right now my mind is set on one goal and once that is accomplished come February we'll just have to see what comes next.

PEZ: Finally, tell us about the charity organization you work with.

I have the privilege of working with the Happy Tooth Foundation. They're an amazing organization bringing awareness to childhood hunger along with providing opportunities for children to get involved in sport. As an athlete and growing up as one, I know the importance of both. To imagine a child having to go hungry is devastating so I'm hoping to help in any way I can to end childhood hunger.

Information on [the Happy Tooth Foundation HERE](https://thehappytoothfoundation.org). <https://thehappytoothfoundation.org>

Petra Acker Prepares for the 2018 Winter Olympic Team

<https://saratogatodaynewspaper.com/today-in-saratoga/sports/item/7096-petra-acker-prepares-for-the-2018-winter-olympic-team>

Clifton Park — Petra Acker is a 24 year old from Clifton Park, New York currently training to earn a spot on the 2018 Winter Olympic Team. She is a Long Track Speed Skater, specifically long distance events. Acker trains with the US All-Around National team in Salt Lake City, Utah under coach Tom Cushman, she also has two coaches back home in New York, Pat Maxwell and Paul Marchese, who also participate in her training.

“It’s a team effort and I have great people on my side!” Acker gushed.

This will be her third Olympic Trial, after participating as the youngest competitor at the 2010 trials at just 16 years old. She has competed on the World Cup circuit for many years, along with the Junior World Championships at 15, which was her first international competition. Last year, Acker took on the World Single Distance Championships in South Korea at their Olympic venue as part of the team pursuit, which took sixth place.

Acker trains for six hours a day, “some days are more, some days are less,” she said.

Her training incorporates different types of cross training, especially during the summer months.

“Daily, you can find me running on the track, cycling, inlining, lifting weights, doing dry land, which specifically targets skating muscles and techniques, and skating both long track and short track,” she explained.

Acker keeps her schedule rigid and busy, “In racing season, we general get to the rink around 8:00 a.m. and finish around 12:00 p.m. Then I’ll eat lunch and try to sneak in a little nap if I have time. Around 2:00 p.m. or 3:00 p.m. we will start our second session, which usually lasts two to three hours. Then I’ll go home, eat dinner, and pass out pretty early.”

Acker was a homeschooled student and needed to fulfill a physical education. Her mom contacted Acker’s grandfather, Howard Ganong, an internationally ranked Masters skater, and asked him if he would take her to the rink and teacher her how to skate.

“Despite holding on desperately to the sideboards and falling my way around the rink the first few times, I loved it. Eventually when I could skate on my own, he would time me and I would always respond with, ‘okay let’s go again, I know I can go faster!’ The rest is history,” Acker recalled.

Acker has faced a few setbacks in her career, as any athlete can.

“Going into the 2014 Olympic Trails, I had been skating well and had a strong chance of making the team. I ended up finishing fourth in my distance which didn’t qualify me. That loss broke my spirit and for the next year and a half I really struggled. My results were really poor so I moved back home to New York from Utah and decided to take a break from the sport. After a few months off, I decided I wanted to continue and I’ve now come back even stronger with a renewed passion and greater focus,” Acker said.

That renewed passion and focus certainly paid off. “I skated personal best times last season, finishing on the podium in all my events at the US Championships. I’m feeling more fit than ever so I am hopefully anticipating skating some more personal bests this season,” Acker informed me. Acker is ready to move forward with her skating dreams.

“With the heartbreaking setback of missing the 2014 team, and the death of my father last year, I think my greatest achievement in the sport is that I’m still here and I’m still fighting,” she said.

Acker’s father took her to all of her practices and also fell in love with the sport, becoming involved as an official.

“Skating was ‘our thing’ and both him and my mom have unconditionally supported me since the beginning. His dream became seeing me accomplish my dream of becoming an Olympian, and he went above and beyond anything I could ask to help me realize that. Whenever I have imagined making my first Olympic team, the greatest moment was imagining crossing the finish line and having my dad’s face be the first I see and the tears and hug we would share. He always told me, ‘skating is what you do, not who you are.’ I know he loved me and was proud of me even if I never become an Olympian. I want to finish this journey we started together for the both of us, and that is an inspiration that fuels me,” Acker explained.

“I love waking up every day and having the opportunity to challenge myself and push my limits. There is an insane amount of pressure being an elite athlete, sometimes that can be extremely draining, but it also teaches you how to cope with difficult situations that can carry over into other areas of life. I don’t like the stress that comes along with racing, but I love the intensity and adrenaline rush you experience from competing, especially when you see all the hard work translate into a good performance,” Acker finished.

Acker will be competing in the Long Track Qualifiers on October 11 through 15 in Salt Lake City, Utah. She will also be competing in the Long Track Olympic Trials January 2 through 7 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Q&A with Heather Bergsma

<http://www.nbcolympics.com/news/qa-heather-bergsma>

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

My parents were very influential. They both grew up speed skating on quads and did artistic skating, so I grew up always at a skating rink.

Do you have any pets?

I have a 3-year-old Japanese Spitz named Yuki.

In your hometown of High Point, North Carolina, what are your favorite spots to relax, eat out, etc.?

Archdale Family Fitness
De Been Coffee
Pure Light Yoga
Full Moon Oyster Bar
Austin's Steakhouse

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

Mostly 7:00 am. I feel my best when I get at least 9 hours of sleep so I try to go to bed by 10, and on days that I have the time I like to take a one hour nap after lunch.

How much time do you spend training each day?

It depends on the season. In the summer we put in a lot more hours than during the actual season.

What's your typical training day/schedule?

Summer training we do a lot of jogging, weights, inlining and cycling. During the season we mostly cycle and skate on the ice.

How do you work to achieve your daily goals?

Push myself and give everything at training so I have no excuses.

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

Biking the Stelvio for sure.

What is your earliest memory of doing or seeing skating?

The earliest memory that I love is my first inline meet in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. I just remember it also felt like a family vacation because my family used to go there once a year together, and I got to compete for the first time with everyone there. I liked all the support and loved skating

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

I remember watching the Salt Lake Games because there were so many inliners that had made the transition to ice and were competing. I thought it was amazing to see, but at the time I was still hoping inline would land a spot at the Olympics.

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?

After moving to Salt Lake in 2007 and qualifying that same year for the World Cup circuit I knew my goal was to be on the 2010 team.

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

To me the hardest part of speed skating is that so much comes from feeling.

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

My coach is Jillert Anema. I have been working with him for 3 years now. It's a good combination, he is a great coach and if I ever am questioning anything he always gives a response of why it's been done or how the planning is gonna work out.

Have you ever worked with a sports psychologist? If so, how did it help you?
I have and I think it was great for my mental training or toughness.

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

You have nothing to lose only something to gain.

What advice would you give to a young child just starting out in speed skating?

Always have fun.

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

Brittany Bowe and it's definitely friendly. We bring out the best in each other.

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

I love that there are plenty of places to be social, but also it allows you to kind of shut things out and focus if you need to as well.

How and where do you train over the summer?

I live in the Netherlands now so I train there.

What are your pre-competition rituals?

Skates sharpening and relax.

Do you have a lucky charm you can't compete without?

If my Chapstick counts then yes.

Do you speak any languages other than English?

Dutch. I wouldn't say I'm fluent yet I understand a lot better than I speak. I took lessons over Skype.

Do you have any tattoos?

I have "hope" on my side written in a purple ribbon for my grandma that passed away with Hodgkin lymphoma, I have two fish on my feet for a Pisces, I have family written on my wrist, and I also have the letter H and J together on my ring finger.

What are your favorite TV shows?

Fixer Upper
Boer Zoekt Vrouw

What are your personal care indulgences?

I love massages even though I don't have them so often.

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

Waking up and taking the dog out for a walk

Have you ever done karaoke?

I'm horrible.

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

I just want to be at my best.

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 don't know my schedule exactly but I will not be in North Carolina with my family. I will either be training in Milwaukee or be in the Netherlands.

Who is Heather Bergsma

<http://nbc4i.com/2017/10/10/who-is-heather-bergsma/>

U.S. speed skater Heather Bergsma, who competed under her maiden name, Heather Richardson, at the Vancouver and Sochi Olympics, is a world record holder and world champion going for her first Olympic medal in PyeongChang.

Speed skating beginnings

Bergsma was introduced to skating through her parents, who both raced and did artistic skating on quad (four-wheeled) roller skates. Growing up two minutes from the local roller rink in High Point, North Carolina, Bergsma was so in love with skating that she remembers wanting to go skating even when she was sick.

At age nine, a local coach spotted Bergsma at the rink and suggested she start taking inline speed skating classes. Her parents forced her to wait a year before entering her first competition, which she says is one reason she got hooked on the sport.

“I went to my first race and won everything,” Bergsma said, “so I think that made me really excited to stay with the sport.”

Bergsma competed on inline skates for nine years, but made the move onto the ice after graduating high school.

“I’d just finished skating in 2007,” Bergsma said. “I finished the world championships on inlines. I came home for two weeks and I made a phone call to [Olympic champion speed skater] Derek Parra and was, like, ‘Hey, I’m really interested in trying ice speed skating. Can I join the group?’ At the time, he had a group called W.H.I.P., which is Wheels to Ice Program. And so within two weeks, I had all my bags packed, and my parents drove me to Salt Lake City.”

The transition was more difficult than she expected, though. The first time she stepped onto the ice, Derek Parra told her she looked like “Bambi on ice.” But it didn’t take long for Bergsma to become comfortable on ice skates, and she made her debut on the World Cup circuit two months later.

Breakout moment

After an unremarkable showing in her Olympic debut at the 2010 Vancouver Olympics—she finished 6th in 500m, 9th in 1000m and 16th in the 1500m—Bergsma found her winning stride in 2013. She started the year by winning gold at the 2013 World Sprint Championships, a competition which combines times from the 500m and 1000m races.

Then in the competitive season before the 2014 Sochi Olympics, Bergsma won the 1000m race at three of the four World Cup events.

Sochi Olympic experience

Although she entered the 2014 Sochi Olympics a medal favorite in the 1000m, Bergsma struggled along with the rest of the U.S. speed skating team. She finished seventh in both the 1000m and 1500m events, and 8th in the 2x500m.

But she did have a few reasons to celebrate in Sochi: her then fiancée and now husband, Dutch speed skater Jorrit Bergsma, won gold in the 10,000m and bronze in the 5000m.

Major competitions

A few months after the 2014 Sochi Olympics, Bergsma moved to the Netherlands to live and train with Jorrit and his Dutch professional team. Now based in the most successful speed skating country in the world, Bergsma became one of the sport's most consistent stars.

At the last three World Single Distance Championships, Bergsma has won nine total medals, including three golds: 500m in 2015, and 1000m and 1500m in 2017. She'll be a podium favorite in all three distances at the 2018 PyeongChang Olympics.

Bergsma will also be a top contender in the mass start, an event that is being added to the Olympic program in 2018. Bergsma won bronze in the mass start, which sees a group of up to 24 skaters race simultaneously instead of in pairs, at the 2017 World Single Distance Championships.

Records held

Bergsma has held the world record in the 1500m since November 2015. She also broke the 1000m world record in 2015—but she held the honor for just eight days before her teammate and friendly rival, Brittany Bowe, bettered it to claim the record for herself.

Bergsma describes her rivalry with Bowe as “definitely friendly. We bring out the best in each other.”

Signature

Before Bergsma steps onto the ice, she always completes her good luck ritual: putting on Chapstick. Her teammates tease her for her dedication to the lip balm, but her coach decided to support her habit with a birthday gift.

“My coach actually collected ChapSticks from each place that we went to for the World Cup circuit and gave it to me for my birthday at the end of the year. So I'm stocked up now,” Bergsma said.

Top quotes

“The years leading up to Sochi, I had one medal at the World Single Distance Championships, only a bronze. And going into these [2018 PyeongChang] Games, I've medaled at every world championships leading into Korea. So that was a big goal of mine is to have medals there, to prove to myself that it is possible.” — Heather Bergsma

Off the ice

Bergsma met Jorrit Bergsma, her future husband, on the World Cup circuit during the 2011-12 season and reached out to him via Twitter. He proposed in the spring of 2013, Bergsma moved to Jorrit's hometown of Aldeboarn, the Netherlands in 2014 and they married in May 2015.

While the transition was difficult—Bergsma remembers crying of homesickness when she first got there, and says she still calls her mom three times a day—Jorrit tried his best to make her feel at home. Bergsma said the best date they ever went on was on the Fourth of July, when Jorrit took her to an American restaurant in the Netherlands for a special American dinner.

But Bergsma has embraced Dutch culture, and became a fan of a Dutch show called “Boer Zoekt Vrouw.”

“I think you could compare it to something like *The Bachelorette*,” she said. Except instead of personal trainers and software salesman competing for an engagement ring, “It’s farmers looking for love.”

Bergsma enjoying life abroad

<http://www.sltrib.com/sports/2017/09/25/olympic-summit-notes-veteran-halfpipe-medalist-kelly-clark-still-has-some-tricks-left/>

The face of U.S. Speedskating is still adjusting to life overseas. Heather Bergsma, the 28-year-old long-track speedskater from High Point, N.C., moved to the Netherlands to live with husband Jorrit Bergsma and train full-time. The two-time Olympian and six-time world champion medalist was once based in the Salt Lake Valley, training at the Utah Olympic Oval.

“The main difference is just how much more biking we do,” Bergsma said over conference call Monday. “We bike every day.”

Despite no longer being close to her friends and American teammates, Bergsma said she remains in constant contact with her fellow U.S. speedskaters over various social media applications.

“It feels like I haven’t even left,” she said.

Q&A with Joey Mantia

<http://wwlp.com/2017/10/03/qa-with-joey-mantia/>

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

They were instrumental in helping me achieve my goals. My parents basically went broke supporting my dreams and I can never do enough to repay them for it. Traveling all over the country to compete in a non-Olympic sport, having absolutely no idea that it could one day be a means of income for me and ultimately become my livelihood, leading me to become an ice skater and compete in the Olympics was an incredibly selfless act of love on their part. How many parents would follow their child blindly down that sort of path, pouring every dime into what they could only perceive to be their child's happiness? I don't think many, and that's why I'm extremely lucky.

My parents always made sure that education was my number one priority when I was growing up; they had a rule that if I ever got a C in school I couldn't skate any more, which motivated me to have a good head on my shoulders, and that's probably what I'm most grateful for.

Neither of my parents went to college, so naturally they strongly encouraged me to do so, however when I graduated high school I was inline skating all over the world, racing for a pro team and making a living doing it. I chose to put college off so I could focus 100% of my time and effort into being the best in the world at what I was doing. Although it went against what they wanted, both of my parents stood behind my decision and supported me, just as they do today with everything I do. Having them in my corner makes it so much easier to commit to big goals, knowing that whether I succeed or fail, they will always be proud of me.

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

I own a coffee shop called Coffee Lab. It is located inside the College of Pharmacy at the University of Utah. I opened it about a year ago with a friend of mine who is an incredible barista from Portland, not because I have a love for coffee, but because I have a strong ambition to be my own boss and jumped on an opportunity when it presented itself.

I recognized my business partner's passion for making coffee by the way he talked about it, his love for it reminded me of how I am with speed skating. We are just a small shop, so for me it isn't a viable means of income yet, but more a great project to learn the business and have something to focus on after the Olympics. We have plans to open a new location, and my partner has even created a new filterless brew method that we are working on patenting.

When I first moved to Salt Lake City to become an ice skater and start down the path to seal my skating legacy with Olympic gold, I was living off of the money I saved from being an inline skater. I wanted to focus 100% of my time and effort into being as good as I could be, because I knew if the results started coming, then financial support from the USOC would also come, so I chose not to get a job. The first few years were a little tough, as it wasn't exactly a smooth transition for me. After a while, things started to come around and with some decent results I was able to qualify for performance funding. Now, I'm fortunate to be able to support myself with that funding.

Do you have any pets?

No, but I follow an embarrassing amount of dog accounts on Instagram. If I didn't travel so much I would definitely have a German Shepherd pup.

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

Ocala [Florida] isn't a place I ever go back to, and to be honest I don't know if I could even name 3 must-see things. When I lived there, my life was pretty much eat, sleep, train, repeat. I hear it's growing and getting better, but the lack of stuff to do there when I was a kid is probably part of the reason I was able to be successful... no big distractions. Maybe a blessing in disguise.

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

It varies. Sometimes 6 if I'm trying to get a bike ride in before practice. If not, usually wake up at 7 to eat and get to the rink by 8, on the ice at 9.

I don't usually nap unless training was outrageous that day, but when I do they're typically over 90 minutes. As far as total sleep goes, I perform really well when I get over 9 hours each night. Going to bed early is definitely one of my biggest challenges.

How much time do you spend training each day?

At least five hours.

What's your typical training day/schedule?

Wake up with enough time to get some food in me and digested before I get on the ice. I get to the rink about an hour before ice starts to do a good warm-up with a little bit of spinning, jogging, and some dynamic mobility exercises.

Once on the ice, the workout will vary depending on where we are in the training cycle. The average duration on the ice is about 90 minutes. After ice is over I like to spend about 10 minutes on the bike and then about 30 minutes stretching, which is something I never did as a kid, but the older I get, the more it becomes a staple in my routine.

I then try to get some food in me to aid with recovery, usually protein with some high glycemic carbs. After that I try to go eat lunch, just to get a little more nutrition in me on top of the recovery food.

The afternoons usually consist of some sort of plyometrics or a bike ride. The same cool down and diet trend follows. Then I eat dinner, relax a bit, and head to bed. That's my life 5 days a week. 1 day a week is an easier day, which is usually just a long bike ride. The other day is off.

How do you work to achieve your daily goals?

Steven Prefontaine once said, "To give anything less than your best is to sacrifice the gift." That quote really resonates with me. I wake up each morning thinking about how fortunate I am to have been given such an incredible opportunity to do what I love to do and I how I owe to those who aren't as fortunate to take advantage of it.

What is your favorite workout or fitness trend?

I've always believed that the harder I work, the better I'll get. That being said, I really like the ideology behind HIIT. It's always been something that has worked for me and because of it, I never shy away from putting my body through some heavy punishment at practice.

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

I once rode my bike up every major canyon in the Salt Lake City valley in one ride solo. It was a total of 8 hours and 53 minutes riding time, 16,060 vertical feet of climbing, and 147.3 miles. I did it without a support vehicle, and stopped just 2 times to eat. I burned 8166 calories in a single workout. Little Cottonwood, Big Cottonwood, Mill Creek, Emigration + Big Mountain, and City Creek Canyons.

I guess the best way to describe it would be a little like Forrest Gump when he started running, I got to the top of the first canyon and said, "I think I'll keep riding"... when I got the top of the last one I said, "I think I'll go home now."

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

Most of us are competing in sports that are extremely top heavy in terms of support. If you're the best in the world consistently, there's nothing to worry about in that regard, however most Olympians are working their way up through the ranks and have very little, if any, support while doing so. Most rely on family and/or balancing training with a part-time job.

It's sort of like loving your job so much that you do it for 4 years making just enough to pay your rent and food because you know you have what it takes to be the best in the world at what you do. The tricky part is, you CAN earn that support but you have to perform one time, on one particular day, and you have to be the best in the entire world at your job when you do. Don't be sick, because there are no make-up days for this performance. It's overwhelming sometimes, but I guess that's the vicious nature of sport.

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

I rode my bike more than any speed skater on the planet last year I think, but that was more because I just love to ride than for actual training.

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

Luckily for me, I don't have any crazy injury comeback stories.

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

I go through spurts where I'm extreme with my diet, and then other times I'm very general with it, focusing just on eating enough to sustain a good level of training. Typically, if I'm trying to lose weight I will count calories, weighing every single thing that goes in my body, keeping track of it with My Fitness Pal.

I do this because trying to lost weight when you're under a strenuous training load can be really dangerous if you're in too much of a calorie deficit, so I keep a very close eye on the diet to make sure I'm not losing too much weight too quickly which could put me into a hole that would be hard to dig myself out of.

A normal day would be a breakfast consisting of something easy to digest, mostly a low glycemic carb with some sort of protein. For example, apple sauce with some egg whites. Immediately after training I would take in about 20 grams of protein and as many grams of high glycemic carbs, such as raisins, that I could handle to start replenishing the glycogen I depleted from the workout. Lunch would be pasta with salmon usually. After my second workout, I would follow the same routine as the first workout. Then dinner would be nutrient dense foods with no concern for ease of digestion.

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

Pizza, sushi, a caveman burger from R&R BBQ, cookie, or cheesecake.

What is your earliest memory of doing or seeing skating?

When I was a kid, I really liked skating. I spent a lot of time at public skating sessions, whipping around, usually getting kicked off the floor for going too fast. I remember one day after the public session was finished I was walking my rental skates back to the skate counter to trade them in for my shoes when I noticed on the skate floor about 20 people skating around on what I probably would have described as really high tech looking roller blades. They were cruising around a track marked by 4 cones; I was in awe.

Until that moment, I had always had a thing for going fast on skates, but I never knew it was an actual sport. Needless to say, I had to give it a try. After my first practice with the team I was hooked. Going fast on skates and leaning into a turn is a feeling that I don't think many people ever have or will experience in their life, but it's one of the coolest things I've ever felt. That coupled with the adrenaline rush from racing is what propelled me to dedicate my life to becoming the best speed skater in the world.

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

My earliest memory of the Olympics was watching Michael Johnson make history in Atlanta with his golden shoes. He was a machine and I remember being so inspired by what he did, even at a young age. I imagined that I could one day be the best in the world at my sport, but I never imagined it happening at the Olympics because my sport wasn't part of the 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?

The first few years after I made the switch to long track were a little rough going. I just couldn't seem to break all the habits I created on inline skates and retrain my body and coordination to do new movements. I would have decent practices here and there, but I could never put it into racing.

In 2013, the final World Cup before the Olympics was in Berlin. My coach and I decided we would just train through the event and not really read into the results too much, as we were preparing for Olympic Trials coming up in a month. I don't know if it was the relieved stress of not caring or what, but I felt better in those races than I ever had before on the ice. I won the 1500m and it was at that exact moment that I said to myself, "Ok, we know we can do this, now let's do it." From that point I've still had ups and downs, but I always know in the back of my mind I'm capable of beating anyone I'm up against if I prepare correctly and my mind is in the right place.

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

I can only give my opinion about this because I haven't tried every other sport, but I think long track speed skating is the hardest sport on the planet. You need to have near flawless technique over the course of the entire race, even when your legs produce so much lactic acid you can barely see straight.

The race is a time trial, so you're all by yourself, having to judge exactly how much effort to give from the start to the finish, you cannot have a single ounce of doubt or you will crumble. Each distance has

its own technique that you have to use, so if you skate more than one distance you have to be able to change the way you skate a little bit, because one style of skating will not work across the board.

The technique alone is enough to drive someone insane. For every fraction of a second that the timing of your stroke is off, your efficiency diminishes exponentially. It doesn't matter how good of shape you're in, if you skate poorly, you will struggle. If your nervous system is a little too tired, it can sometimes feel like you've never put on skates before. It really has the hardest aspects of the toughest sports all wrapped into one, which makes me often question why I made the switch haha.

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

I would say there is a misconception about inline speed skating. We're not that guy weaving back and forth across the boardwalk on his rollerblades in SoCal with a leopard print thong and a Kenny G hair cut listening to George Michael on his gigantic headphones. Inline speed skating is a legitimate sport that really deserves more recognition than it gets and I think it's sort of cursed by the stigma of "roller blading."

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

Matt Kooreman. 3 years. Great relationship.

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

There are a lot of inliners that have come over, and I like to hang with them mostly because we've all known each other for a long time.

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

Yea. I can be a bit of a head case from time to time. Working with the psych definitely helps me keep my head on straight.

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

When I was really struggling to figure out ice skating Joey Cheek told me to just let it happen. He told me that the harder I try to figure it out, the deeper I'm going to dig myself into a hole. Just relax and trust in my ability. It's really easy to overthink such a technical activity, so that advice was golden for me.

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

I used to get bullied pretty badly in middle school. I remember some kids calling me names because I was a speed skater who wore spandex. I really struggled with that, feeling like an outcast and uncool... I just wanted to fit in and be part of the crew. I almost quit the sport numerous times because of it. I'm glad that my parents and coach were able to keep me in it, because it has given me pretty much every thing I have today.

What is your biggest fear when competing?

That I'm going to let myself down. Nobody sets higher expectations for me than I do for myself, so I get really disappointed and down on myself from time to time when I don't perform to the best of my ability.

Who is your Olympic role model?

I think Eric Heiden is one of the nicest guys I've ever met. Despite being possibly the greatest Olympian in history and having accomplished so much with his life even after sport, he is a very humble and down to earth person. It reminds me that there's so much more to this than winning races, that the real inspiration comes from the kind of human you are.

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

My teammate Brittany Bowe. Other than being just an incredible athlete, she's mentally stronger than anyone I've ever met in my life. She's missed an entire season more or less because of a concussion she got in summer training. It has caused her to have dizzy spells and often times pass out, which is incredibly scary. They have been working on a rehab plan for her, but no one is really sure what exactly is causing all of the issues. Despite all of that, I've never once heard her be negative about the situation. It's absolutely incredible and sets a precedent I think every athlete on the planet should aspire to.

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

I think I would have to say Steve Prefontaine. I first heard about him when I was running cross country in high school. I remember watching the movie "Without Limits" and being inspired by his mental toughness. He went into every race believing that nobody could touch him. It was a powerful gift he had.

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

I would say embrace the suck. There are going to be so many days where you want to take your skates off and throw them in the garbage can—don't. Enjoy the ride, because one day it will be over and you'll look back and whether you achieved your goals or not, you'll appreciate how strong of a person you've become on your journey.

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

I think my biggest rival is myself. I have no doubt in my mind that my physical capability is enough to land me on the top of the podium if my mind is in the right place.

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

Apart from the free McDonald's, which is an answer I'm assuming you're going to read a lot, the feeling of greatness. You're in a village with some of the most talented people on the face of the earth and to be a part of that community is really an honorable feeling.

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

I would say it's a close call between my parents, my inline coach growing up, and my inline team when I was a kid. My parents for always supporting me in my journey despite it costing them nearly every penny they earned working. My coach because she was incredibly passionate about teaching skating and most importantly she was very, very good at it. She had her eye on myself and Brittany Bowe winning Olympic gold medals long before we ever did. And finally, my team. Without having an incredible training group around me when I was up and coming, I don't know that I would have been as successful as I have been. It's nearly impossible to do it alone.

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

Not with inline skating. With ice, I definitely had some people tell me in the early years that I wouldn't be as good on ice as I was on inline. I just kept in mind that I'm the one putting everything on the line to pursue my dreams and the only opinion that matters is the one I have of myself.

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

I have 12 junior and 28 senior world titles in inline skating, 1 world title in ice skating. All my medals are in a box in my closet.

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

Having earned the right to wear the rings. It's a symbol that everyone on the planet recognizes. It's prestigious. People respect how much hard work and dedication it takes to be an Olympian.

Do you have a nickname? Who calls you by it?

When I was younger and skating inline they used to call me Supermantia. I think a guy who worked for the company I was sponsored by at the time came up with it. Fans mostly.

Do you have any hidden talents?

I can wiggle my ears. I taught myself to play piano. I can kind of juggle.

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

World Bicycle Relief. With my love of riding, I really like that they provide transportation to lesser developed villages who otherwise would have no way to reach food/water and education other than by walking. I found out about them through a friend who works for the bicycle company SRAM. The owner of SRAM actually started the organization.

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

I'd like to think I'd be really rich haha. I've always been ambitious and I think that would have been a very useful trait over the past 10 years as an entrepreneur.

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

Sleep in. After I get up and moving, go to either Park Cafe or Roots, two of my favorite breakfast spots. Then head to the park and enjoy the weather, maybe pet some dogs. After that I'd round up the troops for some sports. Then we'd all get lunch at R&R BBQ. After that I'd head home and hop on the motorcycle for a cruise through the canyons going way too fast. Then I'd chill on the couch for a bit, thinking about where to eat for dinner. Probably some sushi. Then video games for a couple of hours and call it a night.

How do you unwind after a competition?

Learning new stuff on the piano takes my mind off of skating and helps me relax.

Do you have any fears?

Heights yes, spiders if it's bigger than a quarter it will stop me dead in my tracks, but snakes no. I grew up with a pet snake. One time we lost him in the house for 3 months. He finally came out when he was hungry. We had to get rid of him when he got too big, about 10 feet long.

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

I like to visit different places, but getting there sucks. I like Italy for the food. Austria is the most beautiful place I've been in my life. Colombia has the best nightlife of any place I've visited.

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

I talk to myself, probably a lot more than I should. Shower. Car. Anytime I'm alone and no one else is around I'll randomly have a short convo with myself. Not weird at all.

What's your personal motto?

Every Day Is Leg Day!

What are some of your hobbies?

Photography is my favorite. I love the way people react when you show them a beautiful photo, particularly of themselves. Trail running is something I really enjoy because it's outside and it's also exercise. Piano is my favorite way to relax, plus people seem to really enjoy the sound of a piano. Riding the motorcycle is my favorite thing to do when I'm looking for a rush.

What is your music of choice while training?

I like to listen to anything that puts me in a good mood and I genre hop weekly. One day I could be listening to "Work It Out" by Netsky and the next it could be "Like A Wrecking Ball" by Eric Church, which is probably the Ocala in me calling out for some country. The week after it could be Billy Ocean (thanks Mom and Dad) and then on to Bush. I really just like music that reminds me of a good time in my life. If I'm in a good mood, I usually perform well.

Do you have any celebrity crushes?

Aubrey Plaza... I'm not sure what it is, but any time Parks and Rec would be on I'd stop just to see her.

Do you have an Olympic crush?

I don't know if I'd call it a crush, but I remember watching the Summer Games and seeing [U.S. diver] Kassidy Cook on TV, I think I literally said out loud, "whoa, who is that."

What are your favorite TV shows?

Lucky Number Sleven, Fight Club, The Prestige, Wedding Crashers, Step Brothers, Crazy Stupid Love

Are you a fan of K-Pop music?

I'm a fan of how ridiculous it is haha.

What are your personal care indulgences?

I definitely spend more on my hair cuts than any of my friends do.

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

Being outdoors, whether it's walking at the park or the mall. Just anything where I'm not sitting inside all day letting blood just pool in my legs.

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

I don't have a gym bag but if I did, I would say: 1. My phone to take pictures of people who are taking pictures of themselves in the mirror at the gym... for snapchat. 2. One of those hand squeeze things that you use to make your grip stronger. I would walk into the middle of the gym fully suited in workout attire, including head and wrist sweat bands, whip that bad boy out, do about 20 reps where I'm groaning as if I'm squatting 500 lbs, put it back in my bag, and leave the gym. I can only think of 2 things. I don't actually lift weights so I don't usually find myself in a gym, ironically enough

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 many times, for both inline and ice skating. They are a country that really knows the sport of speed skating. The crowds at the world championships were awesome so I know it will be slammed packed and loud for racing at the Games.

Do you like kimchi or any other Korean foods?

Kimchi is okay, but Korean BBQ is what's up.

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

I'm the worst singer on the planet. One time my friends thought it would be funny to put my name in without me knowing. They called me up and of course I'm not going to back down so I went up and destroyed (in a bad way) "Tiny Dancer" by Elton John. It was so much worse than they thought it could ever be. They never pulled that prank again.

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

Gold. The only thing I have left to add to my resume is being able to write the end of my skating legacy in gold ink.

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 might go to Florida just to be at sea level after Olympic Trials. I'll still be in training mode, so I'll just be looking forward to some sunshine and warm weather.

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

I would ask Santa for some good Olympic karma. By then all the work has pretty much been done and it's just time to perform.

Perry looking forward to Olympic Trials

<http://www.ourmidland.com/sports/article/Perry-looking-forward-to-Olympic-Trials-12302081.php>

Aspiring Olympic long track speed skater Brett Perry of Midland earned a key milestone recently in his bid to make the U.S. Olympic team for the Winter Games in South Korea in February.

Perry skated a personal-best time of 35.91 seconds in the 500-meter race at the Fall World Cup Qualifier two weekends ago in Kearns, Utah, where he has also been training for the past couple of years.

Perry's previous best time was 36.03 seconds in the 500, the event in which he hopes to qualify for the Olympics.

Perry placed sixth in the World Cup Qualifier, needing to place in the top five to qualify. But he was elated to break under 36 seconds in the 500.

"I'm really happy with it," Perry, 24, said by phone from Utah. "Breaking 36 seconds and shaving a tenth of a second off of my personal best, that's pretty good."

The long track Olympic trials will be held Jan. 2-7 at the Pettit Center in Milwaukee, Wis. Perry said that only two spots are currently available for the 500-meter race on the U.S. Olympic team, but added that if the U.S. World Cup team performs well enough in upcoming international competitions, a third spot could be awarded to the U.S.

"I'm hoping we can get three spots. It'd be a lot better for me," Perry said.

Perry is coached by Tucker Fredricks, a three-time U.S. Olympic skater who holds the U.S. record in the 500 at 34.31 seconds, and is an 11-time World Cup gold medalist in the 500.

Q&A with Mitch Whitmore

<http://www.nbcolympics.com/news/qa-mitch-whitmore>

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

Very. My parents let me try every sport and made staying active an important part of my life. They always pushed me to give full effort in whatever I was doing. They took me to practice 3-5 times per week and sometimes more. Without their support I would not have been able to participate in speed skating.

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

I'm a certified level 2 coach in speed skating and conduct private lessons in my off-time to help support myself. I also assist the local club team from time to time for free.

Do you have any pets?

2 cats. Leo and CJ. They're just really fun!

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

Spring Garden for Chinese food. Blue's Egg for breakfast. Jimmy's Grotto for lunch or dinner. Majestic Movie theater. Skate at the Pettit Center!

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

I wake up between 7 and 8. I try for 10 hours.
How much time do you spend training each day?

It varies. Summer time- 6-8 hours

What's your typical training day/schedule?

Warm-up 8-9 am, ice from 9-11. Another workout at 2pm
How do you work to achieve your daily goals?

Focus. I believe whoever is able to focus the hardest on the task at hand will be the best.

What is your favorite workout or fitness trend?

My favorite workout is bandy! It's our version of hockey with shorter sticks to keep us in a low position.

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

There are too many to name... As a teen, for one workout we did 10x100 meter running accel into 100 'cross-backs' which is a difficult dryland exercise and then a 90 minute circuit of sandbag low walks/ sand bag jumps, stairs, and more sand bag exercises. It was awful.

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

Chinese food or Popeye's.

What is your earliest memory of doing or seeing skating?

I can picture myself stepping on the ice in speed skates for the first time. I loved it right away because I just wanted to go faster and faster in anything I was doing. A couple years after I started, I remember watching the 2002 Games and being inspired by Apolo Ohno.

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

My favorite Olympic moment was [swimmer] Jason Lezak in Beijing coming from behind in the relay to beat the current gold medalist in the 100m freestyle for Michael Phelps to continue his run towards 8 golds.

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 was the youngest competitor at the 2006 Olympic Trials and I skated very well in the long races. I knew at that point that I had a real chance to make it somewhere in the sport.

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

The training, especially the lactate work. It's the worst pain you can experience as an athlete.

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

Matt Kooreman. 4 years now and he's pretty cool. He's more quite than the coaches I was used to but we've adjusted and I'm better than ever under him.

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

Yes. We have a psych that works with the team and he's helped me improve my mental imagery and focus.

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

Think about only two or three things at a time during practice. Focus on those things until they're perfect.

Who is your Olympic role model?

Dan Jansen.

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

Steve Geisler taught me how to train hard and have a good time when I was starting out.

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

THE DUTCH.

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

My piano teacher when I was 13 said I was a jack of all trades, that I'd be good at a lot of things but not the best at anything. I remember that from time to time in training.

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

Not having a real job!

Are you superstitious? What do you do/don't do around competitions?
Basically everything I do when putting my skates on is choreographed..

Do you have any tattoos?

Olympic rings with the American flag through it on my back.

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. Skating at the rink again. It's a nice facility and I like the ice.

Do you like kimchi or any other Korean foods?

Not kimchi but I love bulgogi.

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

Sure have, I'm terrible. "Show Me The Meaning Of Being Lonely" by the Backstreet Boys.

What will success look like for you in PyeongChang? What are your goals?
Gold in the 500 meter race.

Will you head home for the holidays prior to the Games?

Luckily Olympic Trials are in Milwaukee where my parents live so I'll be home for the holidays.

Q&A with Sugar Todd

<http://www.nbcolympics.com/news/qa-sugar-todd>

What's your family like?

My dad was a firefighter for the city of Omaha. My mom was a mom and did whatever jobs came her way that piqued her interest. They are now retired and live in an RV full time, travelling and staying wherever they like for however long feels right. They are currently camp hosts on a campground at Bear Lake on the Utah/Idaho border and plan to stay there through the season. They have spent most of their RV-ing time in Mexico and love it there.

I have one older brother, Mikie, who lives in Omaha and works for the Nebraska Humane Society as a dog trainer. I think we are equally jealous of each other's lives. Most of my family still lives in Nebraska. My dad's side of the family are farmers hailing from Union, Nebraska. The only exception to my Nebraska-bound ilk are my rad aunt and uncle - Jane and Bob - who live in Kauai. Their support of my speed skating dreams is second only to my parents.

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

My parents have been my number one fans from day one. They have always been supportive and never forced me to go to practice. When I was nine, I convinced them to move from Omaha to Milwaukee so I could train at the Pettit National Ice Center. My mom made the move with me full-time while my dad continued to work as a firefighter in Omaha. He would work 24-hour shifts, every other day, for ten days - and then have six straight days off. For those six days, he would drive from Omaha to Milwaukee to stay with my Mom and me. We lived with that routine from the day we moved until after I graduated high school.

My parents, to this day, still help support me financially. They keep putting things in their lives on hold so I don't have to worry about paying rent. It is because of how much they have sacrificed and how, without question, they continue to underwrite my Olympic dreams, that I put "MOM+DAD" on my skinsuit in my primary personal sponsor spot. As far as I'm concerned, they have paid for that logo a million times over.

Do you have another full-time job or business?

Unofficially, I bake and sell biscotti to raise funds for myself. I love to cook/bake and one day I was at home thinking about how biscotti sounded really good right about now. I found a recipe and cranked out a batch. After they came out of the oven and I took a few Instagram-worthy photos, it dawned on me that I could try to sell these in an effort to raise money for myself. It is not a business by any means, but it has proven mildly profitable. And people seem to like them enough to come back for more.

Do you have any pets?

I don't have any pets and the fact that I travel too much to have a dog is a sore subject.

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

SALT LAKE CITY: Coffee and one of everything at the Rose Establishment, hiking in the hills above the Aves, Mount Olympus, Saturday farmer's markets in Pioneer Park, wandering Cactus & Tropicals and flirting with all the plants I'd like to take home with me

MILWAUKEE: Custard from Gilles, snacks from the Riverwest Co-op, seeing live local music, Milwaukee Public Market (I use to work at the Green Kitchen—get a ginger shot!), sitting on the hill at Kilbourne Reservoir Park and looking at the city/lake

OMAHA: Henry Doorly zoo, slides in the Gene Leahy Mall in downtown Omaha (bring wax paper!), beef jerky from the Murray Meat Locker was my favorite but it has since closed, so go to Jerky Factory in Plattsmouth!

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

7 a.m. I sleep 8-9 hours each night and I am a big fan of naps, especially power naps. My teammates joke about how good at sleeping I am. I can and will sleep anywhere when I'm tired and I can fall asleep surprisingly fast.

How much time do you spend training each day?

6-8 hours.

What's your typical training day/schedule?

A typical day varies depending on where in the year we are. From May-October is when we do the most volume in order to build a strong base for our competitive season. A typical day during this time looks like this:

Wake up at 6 am. Make breakfast, make coffee, water plants, pack a lunch, pack all necessary gear for the day. Leave at 7 am. Drive to the Utah Olympic Oval. Arrive by 7:30 am. Drop bag and lunch in locker room, put on heart rate monitor, pull up a playlist, throw on headphones. Begin warming up by 7:45 am with TRX, 10-15 minute spin, core, and dynamic exercises. Give yourself at least ten minutes to wrestle your sweaty body into your skinsuit.

On ice at 9 am. Slam a gel. Warm-up on ice until 9:20 am when the team groups up. Coach goes over the workout, brings it in for a U-S-A on 3. Begin speed skating intervals. Eat a Cliff bar. Finish speed skating intervals.

Off ice around 11:15 am. Cool down on the bike for 10 minutes. Pop into the weight room for 15 minutes to run through pre-hab exercises. Grab part of packed lunch and head to the training room to see Fikre, your physio, for ice or cupping or stim or general re-hab. Head back to the locker room to finish lunch on the couch with legs up. Crank out a power nap.

Wander up to the US Speedskating offices to chit chat with random staff. Begin warming up for weights at 1:30 pm with more TRX and a 10-15 minute spin. Slam a gel. Pump iron until 3:30pm. Eat a Cliff bar. Race back to the locker room to grab your hockey skates and head to the ice for bandy. Play your heart out because it's your favorite workout until 4:15pm. Collapse in the training room, tell Fikre you're ready for your treatment and you think you'll just sleep here on this table tonight. Eat the Cliff bar with the most protein. Take an ice bath.

Waddle out of the Utah Olympic Oval by 5 pm. Realize you're still wearing your heart rate monitor. Drive home. Probably stop at the grocery store, the one you're sponsored by. Arrive home by 6 pm. Make popcorn on the stove because you're too lazy to make dinner. Eat popcorn on the couch and

watch Netflix. Make dinner. Eat dinner on the couch and watch Netflix. Maybe take a shower. Maybe don't. Take your vitamins. Go to bed.
Repeat.

How do you work to achieve your daily goals?

By staying focused and positive. I realize what an incredible life I am currently living and I am determined to make the most out of every day.

What is your favorite workout or fitness trend?

Bandy [a hockey-like sport]. We play bandy during the summer as cross training and it is hands down my favorite workout. But also cycling. I do love a good, hard bike ride.

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

Cycling 200+ miles over three days in southern Utah at the end of June. It was a little hot.

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

How many different types of training we do for speed skating - cycling, running, inlining, weightlifting, slideboard, hockey, swimming, aqua jogging, dryland. Also, people are always surprised to hear that I don't have any dietary restrictions. I really do eat whatever I want.

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

I had my right knee scoped in June 2016. It was from overuse. Turns out my body didn't totally love being in a speed skating position for eighteen years. It took a lot of patience to get through the 2016-17 season. I am still working on rehabbing it, but I can skate on it. And like coach always says... if we can skate, we can win.

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

Just eat everything. Eat everything to stay ahead of the calorie deficit.
If you are to indulge, what's your go-to snack?

When I crave dessert and am feeling creative, I find a recipe and make it. When I crave dessert and am feeling lazy, I go to the store and get mint chocolate chip or salted caramel ice cream.

What is your earliest memory of doing or seeing skating?

I honestly don't remember first trying speed skating, but I remember wanting to be the fastest speed skater in the world.

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

This is a memory I have because my mom has told it to me over and over. When I was a little girl, I saw speed skating on TV during the Olympics and said, "Mommy, I have legs like those girls do."

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

Our skinsuits are so tight, they have a tendency to munch on our nether regions.

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

Matt Kooreman has been my coach since 2014. We have a great relationship. He is quiet most the time, but don't let that fool you. Under all that shaggy hair and beard is the strongest will to win and a knack for comedic timing.

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

My teammates. I am fortunate to have an amazing team that is like a family. When we travel for World Cups, I also get a chance to hang out with my skating friends from other countries. It's the only time I get to see a lot of them.

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

Your mind will give up before your body.

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

It seems easy now, but I think it was hard all those years to stick with this sport, believing in myself but not knowing if that was enough to accomplish my dreams.

What is your biggest fear when competing?

When I was little and didn't want to wake up early on Saturdays for time trials, I would fantasize that a meteor would crash into the building and races would definitely be cancelled. That's not really a fear, but it is a funny story.

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

When I was little, I idolized Bonnie Blair—for obvious reasons (oh hi five gold medals and a bonus bronze). She is a boss. And now I have her phone number and we're friends and she texts me. Dreams do come true.

What advice would you give to a young child just starting out in speed skating?

Focus on your technique. I developed bad habits that I am to this day trying to overcome. It doesn't matter how strong you are. If you can't put your power into the ice, you can't skate fast.

Who is your most interesting teammate?

Paige Schwartzburg. I'm glad speed skating made us friends. We are so different and our paths would not have crossed in life otherwise. I don't know what specifically makes her interesting. Meet her and find out for yourself.

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

One of my closest friends is a speed skater from Canada, Kaylin Irvine. We both started skating at a young age and have probably been racing each other since we were 12. But we didn't become good friends until after we had a heart-to-heart sitting outside a closed gas station in Inzell, Germany after a World Cup.

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

Being able to interact with not only athletes from all over the world, but other American athletes. It is so rare for our paths to ever cross, it takes going all the way to the Olympics to meet other members of Team USA.

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

Dang, dude. That is harsh. If they did, I didn't hear them.

Do you have any hidden talents?

I can whistle with better pitch than I can sing.

Do you have any tattoos?

1. Peace sign on inner wrist was my first tattoo. Me and Savannah Camplin both got them when we were 18. We're really into peace, obviously.

2. Small house above the crook of my elbow. It is a stick and poke that my friend gave me. it represents a house I lived in in the Riverwest neighborhood of Milwaukee. Each of my friends/roommates that lived there has one somewhere on their body. Our roommate, Colin, gave them to us.

3. Small triangle on inside of left foot. represents the number three which is for me and two of my friends.

4. Text on my ribs that says "to wild homes" - it's a line from a song by the New Pornographers that goes "to wild homes we go, to wild homes we return." It's a phrase a friend of mine and I would utter to each other in times of big life change. I've moved a lot in my life, averaging maybe two years per home. I've always embraced that and now home is wherever I go.

5. The Olympic rings on the outside of my right foot. Had it done while I was in Greece because that seemed perfect. It didn't heal right, though, and now half the rings are barely there. Definitely needs a touch up.

Do you collect anything?

I wouldn't say it's a collection in the sense I curated it, but I recently realized I currently have 17 different types of flour in my kitchen. You could say I really like baking.

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

I am an athlete mentor for Classroom Champions. A friend of mine recommended me and after speaking with the organization's athlete coordinator, I was so in. The 2016-17 school year was my first year and I have already agreed to come back for the 2017-2018 school year. Kids have what it takes!

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

Getting paid to travel, explore, eat, and talk about it. That's a real job some people do. I need to find my way into that.

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

Early morning romp through the mountains, day beers and hanging with friends while cooking a massive feast, throw in a dance party, and still be in bed by 10pm.

How do you unwind after a competition?

Face-plant back into bed.

Do you have any fears?

Centipedes are disgusting.

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

I love to travel. I'll go anywhere once. I felt pretty emotional visiting the Panathenaic Stadium in Athens this past April. I love the Olympic Games and everything the Olympic movement stands for so much, and I've spent my life pursuing and upholding those ideals. I would love the chance to visit the ancient Olympic sites in Olympia some day.

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

I've been dyeing the front of my hair blonde since I was 9 years old. My mom said we should do something fun and different with my hair after our big move to Wisconsin and evidently I begged her for a "racing stripe." I've had it ever since. A lot of people assume it's natural because they've never known me without it.

What are some of your hobbies?

Hiking/camping and road tripping to get there. I try to hike and camp as much as my demanding training schedule allows. I have grown to love doing these things by myself, but I always welcome any buddies who are down to play. I am good at banging out long drives and once the idea of a place gets planted in my head, it's going to happen. Driving is a great time to listen to podcasts (I'm looking at you 2 Dope Queens and Radiolab) or work on my karaoke pipes. I love hiking because you can walk anywhere if you want to. You can walk to the top of that mountain or the bottom of that canyon or across all those state lines or right to a greasy burger joint. And I love sleeping outside.

Reading cookbooks like books. I will read a cookbook, ingredient lists and all, cover to cover as if it's a novel. I'll also read recipes online in their entirety even if I have no intention of making it. I don't know why I enjoy that so much.

Do you have any celebrity crushes?

It's not a love crush, but a friend crush. I would love to hang out with Aziz Ansari and eat our way through a city. That guy loves to snack.

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

Doing anything active first thing in the morning. It sets the whole day in motion.
What are five must-have items you always keep in your gym bag?

Buff, training journal, sunscreen, Chapstick, snacks.

Have you been to South Korea before? What are you most looking forward to about the Games being hosted in South Korea?

I've been to South Korea twice. My first time was to Seoul. I took the subway all over the city and went coffee-hopping to third wave coffee shops. I hit five different cafes. Fritz Coffee Company was my favorite, tell BK I say hi.

The second time was to Gangneung which was also awesome. I think they are going to host an incredible Games.

I love South Korea. I love fermented foods so I fit right in.

Do you like kimchi or any other Korean foods?

YES. Yes to all.

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

Oh oh oh, yes. "Say My Name" by Destiny's Child. I'm not the best singer but I will work the heck out of a karaoke audience. You just have to sell it.

What will success look like for you in PyeongChang? What are your goals?
Bringing home the gold, baby.

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?

Speed skating has kind of deprived me of any sort of holiday traditions my entire life. I've learned to celebrate the holidays with my team, who really are like family at this point.

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

I don't know, but I know I'm never doing Secret Santa with my teammates again since I'm still waiting on my present from Joey Mantia from like three years ago.

Q&A with Emery Lehman

<http://www.nbcolympics.com/news/qa-emery-lehman>

What's your family like?

My brother, Graham, was a Division 1 tennis player who just graduated from Lehigh University. My mother, Marcia, is the one who pushed me to try new things and got me into the sport. My father was always supportive of my brother's and my athletic careers, often coaching us in sports like hockey, baseball, and more.

Do you have any pets?

My parents have two cats, Annie and Bleu. Annie is a Sphynx cat, like the one in "Austin Powers," and Bleu is a beatific Russian Blue cat. My roommates and I also have a hamster in Milwaukee named Leon, after the "Curb Your Enthusiasm" character.

In your hometown of Oak Park, IL, what are your favorite spots to relax, eat out, etc.?

My favorites restaurants back in Oak Park are Johnnies Beef, Gene and Jude's, Alpine sandwiches, Di Nicos Pizza, and Mickey's.

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

Depending on the day, usually 7:15 all summer long and 7:30-45 in the winter.

I try and take a nap every weekday, and try to get 8.5 hours of sleep.

How much time do you spend training each day?

Training can vary, some of my most intense workouts are not my longest but that being said training can last from two hours up to seven hours each day.

What's your typical training day/schedule?

Usually every day I will wake up and train; if it is the summer we have dryland or off-ice workouts, and if it is the winter I usually skate in the morning. Then I head home and get some food in me and then nap. If I have time I will do some homework, if not I will do it at night. Then I will have an afternoon training session. Then after that I will eat dinner, do some homework, maybe hang out with my roommates a little if its early enough, then go to bed.

How do you work to achieve your daily goals?

Having my season goals written down in a notebook always helps because then every time during a workout when I am very tired or when I have to wake up super early I can think to those time goals and understand why I just do what I am doing. Nothing beats hard work and a good recovery and diet routine.

What is your favorite workout or fitness trend?

My favorite workout would be speed skating, but if that doesn't count I really think swimming is a peaceful workout.

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

That would be tough to say, every time I race I try and push it harder and faster, so in a sense each race is more grueling than the previous. Other than that, doing one leg squats for 40 seconds on and 20 seconds off for 40 minutes really kills the legs, but then again so can a long bike ride with thousands of feet of ascending.

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

It's doesn't require as much skill as it does dedication and hard work.
Is there anything you do for training that's out of the ordinary or experimental?

I love playing hockey, I am on a men's hockey team in Milwaukee called Milwaukee Tool. I played hockey in high school and think it is a lot of fun and a great workout.

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

Usually I try and eat four times a day. I really rely on my food delivery service, Blue Apron, to supply me with my healthier meals of the week.

What is your earliest memory of doing or seeing speed skating?

I started speed skating when I was 9. Seeing other kids beat me initially really drove me to try and get better and keep up with or beat them.

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

My earliest memory of watching the Olympics was watching short track speed skating at the 2002 Olympics, and not really able to understand what was going on. I didn't start the sport until many years later but I always remember watching and being affected as to what kind of a rink that was because I had only ever seen a hockey rink, and the one on TV had pads all around it and no glass.

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 think when I made the junior world team when I was fourteen I really realized I could excel in the sport.

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

I think that people don't realize how much off-ice and other training we do besides skating. Skating is the most important training method but it only accounts for a fraction of our total training. Other training includes biking, swimming, running, lifting, dryland, strength training, injury prevention training, hockey, short track speed skating, inline speed skating, and sometimes more than just that.

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

Eric Cepuran, he has been my coach for almost a year now and I think we have a much stronger dynamic and mutual respect for each other than my last coaching situation. There is a lot of back and forth, but he relies heavily on my feedback.

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

Don't change something if it's not broke.

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

I would say when I got mono a second time and trying to balance school and training was definitely the toughest years of my life. Trying to regain my strength while still trying to keep up with my good grades and also get healthy at the same time was a tremendous challenge.

What is your biggest fear when competing?

My biggest fear when competing is not effecting my technique as I did in practice. Often times I take three step forwards in training, but then when it comes to racing, it's two steps backwards.

Who is your Olympic role model?

Shani Davis.

What advice would you give to a young child just starting out in speed skating?

I tell any young kid to do as many sports as possible for as long as possible to keep them well rounded. The year before the last Olympics I was playing three sports.

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

Jonathan Kuck, he was a very smart person with a very intelligent family. He is one of the smartest people I have ever met, and also my calculus tutor on the road quite some time ago, and also had a great sense of humor.

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

All of the free food and gear was very cool.

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

My mother and father, my mother drove me to Milwaukee 3-4 days a week and made me eat healthy and get school work done. My dad, on the other hand, refereed competitions and would come up on the weekends when he wasn't working or with my brother at a tennis or soccer game.

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

Being able to say I made an Olympic team because I know how truly hard I worked and what kind of sacrifices I had to make to get there.

Do you have a lucky charm?

I have a hat I've been training in since I was 13.

Do you speak any other languages?

I used to speak Spanish fluently, I went to an intercultural school and my aunt is Venezuelan.

Are you attending college? What are you studying?

Marquette University, I have three semesters left and am studying civil engineering.

Do you have any hidden talents?

I am a great ping pong player.

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

Well my day would never be complete without a workout, ideally a stair workout at my lake house in Sawyer, Michigan, and then relaxing on the beach with my family all day, maybe golf in the afternoon with my cousins, dad, brother, uncle, and grandpa, and then have a bonfire on our beach and watch the sunset.

How do you unwind after a competition?

By getting a lot of sleep.

Do you have any fears?

Spiders and snakes freak me out.

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

I love traveling. Going to the Netherlands for the first time was a magnificent experience, not only because of the skating culture but also because of how cool of a city it was and it was my first international trip without my parents, I was 14.

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

I love Star Trek and Star Wars, yes both.

What's your personal motto?

"I hated every minute of training, but I said, 'Don't quit. Suffer now and live the rest of your life as a champion'" [Muhammad Ali]. And "if you can't fly then run, if you can't run the walk, if you can't walk then crawl, but whatever you do you have to keep moving forward" [Martin Luther King, Jr.]

What are some of your hobbies?

I love playing hockey and hanging out with friends when I have downtime. Mostly staying off of my feet.

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

Beat my last placement at the last games, 16th in the 5k and hopefully be in the top 8 for the team pursuit.

Q&A with Brian Hansen

<http://www.nbcolympics.com/news/qa-brian-hansen>

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

They drove me after high school an hour and a half up to Milwaukee almost every day for speed skating. They would have a meal ready for me in the car, and I can't thank them enough for that. They have helped me in countless other ways, too.

Do you have another full-time job or business?

I work part-time licensing various products. A few years ago I sublicensed a fitness product (a foam roller water bottle) to a company out in California called "SKLZ."

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

In Milwaukee, I surf on Lake Michigan in the winter, even when it is below 30 degrees out. I also have snorkeled the ship wrecks off the coast. I bike all over southeastern Wisconsin including all of Kettle Moraine Scenic Drive (110 mile stretch). I go to outdoor movies at various parks in the summertime including Veterans Park. I enjoy eating out at Jose's Blue Sombrero.

What's your typical training day/schedule?

Many of my days start at Froedtert Sports Medicine Center (one of US Speed Skating's sponsors). I start by foam rolling for half an hour, then work with my strength coach Duane and lift weights, then I have physical therapy with Julie Carpenter. Then I have bike sprints with one of the interns there who is also a speed skater (Olu Sijuwade) or I do an outdoor bike with local group rides or on my own.

How do you work to achieve your daily goals?

I try to keep it fun. I use apps like Strava and I try to get outside as much as possible. I also always look forward to a recovery shake afterwards, sounds weird but it helps.

What is your favorite workout or fitness trend?

My favorite workout is doing a long bike ride where I explore somewhere new. Ideally it ends in a jump in a lake or pool.

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

The hardest workouts are when I show up to the Pettit National Ice Center and it's early in the morning, maybe 8:30 a.m., and it's zero degrees outside and the wind is howling. Then I go inside the Pettit and I'm cold, but it's also freezing cold in the rink and all we have to wear is our thin skin suit. Then there is no music on and no one is at the rink except for me and my two training partners and coach. On days like these we often have to do the hardest workout of the week, which is usually short rest intervals. It's an hour and half long workout with three set rests. We typically end the sets hot and sweaty but then get cooled down during our rest. These are the most grueling workouts of the week.

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

A lot of what we do we make up ourselves. Often times people think that we are subject to a very special and particular training program. And a lot of thought and expertise does go into our training programs, but ultimately doing it and deciding which route to take is up to us in individual sports.

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

Yes, a lot of what I do is experimental. I have made up many workouts in an effort to avoid knee pain and lower back pain. These mostly include hybrid workouts that combine off-ice dry land and cycling.

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

Yes, I have lower back issues as a skater. It has gotten to the point where sometimes I can barely make it to the rink 20 minutes away because it hurts so bad while I am driving. Dealing with this type of injury is hard and takes a lot of patience and creativity to work around it. I have had the help of many great physical therapists including Froedtert Sports Medicine Center. But I also have many tricks including raising the handlebars on my bike 4" higher than a typical road bike, core programs, not skating longer than 3' at a time, and using bungee bands for weights instead of actual weights.

What is your earliest memory of doing or seeing skating?

I remember watching an older skater at Northbrook Speed Skating club. I couldn't believe how few strokes he took to get around the rink. Dedicating my life to it came slowly but growing up in such a 'hotbed' for the sport was key to me sticking with it.

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

My earliest memory of watching the Olympic may be when I was 11 and Apollo crashed and cut his leg and came across the line finishing second. I did not imagine that I would be on the same Olympic team as him 8 years later.

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 remember the first time I raced Shani Davis. It was in the 500 meters for a weekend time trial. It was one of my first races that year. I was 17 and Shani was 25. I had never come close to a time before that race that was comparable to Shani but I beat him down the first 100 meters. I was so excited, I was just scrambling the rest of the race and he beat me but not by much. He was not nearly as serious about the weekend time trial as I was then, but that was a very exciting race for me.

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

People don't realize how big of a sport speed skating is in the Netherlands. It is shown on TV and is considered a main stream sport there. The hardest part of our sport is that we have to compete against these people that there are major celebrities and on pro teams from the Netherlands, and we have to motivate ourselves to beat them. Also, our sport is only "glamourized" once every four years so it makes it much more difficult to motivate for World Cups and world championships the way they do. As American we have to shift our focus mainly to the Olympics, making the sport feel much more pressuring as our true shot at success only comes once every four years.

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

Nancy Swider-Peltz. We have been working together since I was 10 years old. I train with her son and daughter. Many people think she is my mom but she's not. I've just known her forever and the coaching relationship has been great and we are very successful together. When I was little, she would coach me on free skate sessions at a local hockey rink in between our houses. We would mainly work on slow monotonous technical drills. This is why she thinks that today my skating is so technically sound.

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

I train with a skater from Taiwan, Darren Huang. We went surfing together many times last year on Lake Michigan. He is trying to be one of the first people to make the Winter Olympics from Taiwan. He just missed the team in 2010 but I really think he can do it this year. I also socialize with my coach's son Jeff. We do a lot of our biking together. The three of us live in the same house about 4 blocks from the Pettit National Ice Center.

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

My dad likes to emphasize how there are always 100 ways to success. It puts a lot less pressure on skating and training.

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

Trying to define what skating means to me. I think I'm still overcoming this obstacle...

What is your biggest fear when competing?

Making a last minute mistake that costs me the race.

Who is your Olympic role model?

Probably Bob De Jong. He has continued to be on top of the sport in one of the most difficult events.

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

Probably training with my friend and teammate through 2010 and 2014, Jonathan Kuck. He trained harder than probably anyone else in the sport. Just ask the short track team. He jumped in with them for one summer of training and was dropping most of the national team on 100 lap workouts. I am also pretty sure no one was stronger than him for off-ice training. Training with him has been very motivating for me to keep up and to try and train at a higher level.

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

Try to make friends and keep the sport fun.

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

Koen Verweij may be my biggest rival. I am probably not his biggest rival but we have competed against each other since we were juniors in the sport. He was overall junior world champion two years in a row when I was second and third. Though I was junior world champion in the 1000 and 1500 our final year as juniors. He is the type of athlete that who has made it as a celebrity and on a pro team in the Netherlands. We have been on the podium many times together in the 1500; although I have the faster personal best, he has more World Cup wins. He also calls me "Brian Not so Handsome."

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

Yes, I have trained with Japanese, German, Dutch, Swiss, and Norwegian skaters. One skater from Germany who I trained with one summer, Robert Lehman, I became good friends with. I found out after one of the World Cup races that I had bumped Robert off of the Olympic team in the 5k. This 5k was an optional race for me and I didn't consider the possibility of knocking my friend Robert off the Olympic team until after it had happened. Though he was from another country and I have to race my own races, I still felt bad about it. He ended up making the Olympic team through later World Cup races. We were still friends and he was there helping me all the way to the start line for my 1500 in Sochi.

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

In Sochi, I took pictures with all the Chicago Blackhawks. This probably caused more buzz than any of my actual racing.

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

My parents and my coach are the three most influential in helping me achieve my dreams. One story of my mom helping me out was when I went for a workout [outside] when it was about to rain. I thought I would be ok because it was supposed to be a light rain. I got half way through my workout and it turned into a heavy downpour. While I was doing some exercises underneath a tree to stay out of the rain, my mom pulled up in a minivan and asked if I wanted a ride home. I said I think I'll be good, I only have a little longer left and the rain started to let up. About 2 minutes later I was back on the bike and the rain just started dumping. My mom came back and opened up the side door. She didn't have to even ask if I wanted a ride. She just knew at that point that I would want a ride because the rain was too heavy to continue working out. I just said thanks and I got in the car and she drove me home. It is moments like these when you have a parent with an instinct to help you out in any way. I didn't call her or ask for a ride, she just knew where I do my bike rides and saw that it was going to rain and came to pick me up all on her own. I will always be appreciative of things like that.

How and where do you train over the summer?

This summer I have trained mostly in Milwaukee. I do weights at the Froedtert Sports Medicine Center and I do bike rides in the afternoon outside.

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

I won a silver medal in 2010, I keep it in my closet.

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

Getting to go inside the USA house at any Olympics. I love meeting other Olympians and I especially love to see them come inside the USA house right after they won a medal.

What are your pre-competition rituals?

Before many of my 1500s I like to show up to the rink kind of last minute. I show up only about an hour and fifteen minutes before my race and go through quick warm up and then get ready. Sometimes I like to run just a little bit late to keep me focused all the way up to the start line. Also running a little late helps with adrenaline.

Do you have a lucky charm?

I gotta make sure I brush my teeth before I race or else I go crazy.

Are you superstitious? What are you sure to do around competitions?

My cousin gave me blue M&M's before many of my races. I typically race well eating blue M&M's so I try to keep that up.

Do you have a nickname?

Yes my rival that I mentioned earlier, Koen, calls me "Brian Not so Handsome."

Do you have any hidden talents?

Juggling.

Do you collect anything?

I collect crinoid fossils on beach of Lake Michigan. I look for them whenever I go to the beach.

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

Beach bum.

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

Surfing on Lake Michigan and then getting Mexican food and watching an outdoor movie.

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

Yes, Hawaii, it was the last family vacation that we took and my brother, my mom, me and my dad were all in the same place just enjoying the week together.

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

Probably surfing on the lake year-round even when it is snowing, raining and freezing temperatures.

What are some of your hobbies?

Surfing on the lake; I went 50 some days last year all throughout the year. I went in South Korea too after the world championships, I went with my training partners and I've brought old skaters out to go surfing. It's a lot of fun to explore the coast line of Lake Michigan and check out different surf spots. It's fun because whenever you are out surfing in the winter you immediately become friends with whoever else is in the water. Both people are kind of wondering what the other person is doing in the water in the middle of winter.

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

Mashing, when my coach or team mates walk on my legs.

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

SKLZ Hydro-Roller (product I licensed), Skratch Labs hydration mix, MyLaps transponder, DesignsForHealth Recovery Mix, Oakley sunglasses.

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 the food there. I want to surf after the Games are over (which I did after the World Championships).

Do you like kimchi or any other Korean foods?

Yes, I love almost all Korean food.

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

Yes--very bad at it.

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

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?

Our Olympic Trials are right after the holidays. I look forward to those being done with. My cousin is getting married the day before New Year's Eve so that would be nice celebration.

Does your family have any unique holiday traditions?

Yes, my grandpa always brings weird things to our get togethers. Such as frog legs, head cheese, alligator tail, and many other things that often times I don't eat.

Sibling speedskaters trying to make the Winter Olympics

<https://www.tmj4.com/sports/sibling-speedskaters-trying-to-make-the-winter-olympics>

WEST ALLIS - Perhaps the Swider-Peltz kids were born to be Olympians.

There is a photo showing Nancy, Jr. as a baby with her mother, Nancy Sr., visiting then-President Ronald Reagan in 1988. Nancy Sr. is a four-time speedskating Olympian who thought of unique ways to inspire her kids, like putting up motivational quotes on the shower tiles of their Wheaton, Illinois home.

Nancy Sr. now coaches her daughter and son, doing everything from on ice workouts to interactive forms of strength and recovery like walking on their backs. Nancy Jr and her brother, Jeffrey, live and train together but have something else in common: They're both artists in different mediums.

"Recently, I've been getting orders for monogrammed pieces of wood with names and established by dates, this is one of them, I kind of went for a gothic type look," said Nancy Swider-Peltz, Jr., holding up a piece of wood where she has burned in a design with a family's name.

"I have long hair and I wanted a bandana that wasn't paisley so I said I could do a cool design," said Jeffrey Swider-Peltz, showing a bandana he designed. "I've made a spin on the logo from the Mexico Olympics in 1968. These really raw bandanas, they're an ode to the speedskating oval."

He has also screen-printed his own USA design on sweatshirts.

"That artsy side in our family comes from my grandfather and my dad," said Nancy.

"I studied art in college for undergrad. I think of speedskating as an art," said Jeffrey. "Art is good because it's relaxing. You need to be involved in other things besides competing because especially at the Olympic level, it's stressful."

One of Nancy's greatest lessons came when an art teacher made her ruin a picture deliberately, then create something new from the mess.

"That applies to skating, you make mistakes all the time, I've really struggled lately but you keep positive and work through it and there's a greater story at the end," Nancy said.

The two are still crafting their skating stories. Each will be competing at the Olympic Trials at the Pettit Center in January. After that, they hope to grow their respective art businesses.

Kimani Griffin, Winston-Salem native, focused heading into speedskating nationals

http://www.journalnow.com/sports/community_sports/kimani-griffin-winston-salem-native-focused-heading-into-speedskating-nationals/article_d085123b-7de8-5025-b02b-787daf0bb31d.html

The times will come for Kimani Griffin this weekend at the Fall U.S. Long Track World Cup Qualifiers in Kearns, Utah.

The Winston-Salem native is confident of that because of the work he's put in to this point. And if he doesn't set a few personal records in the 500-meter and 1,000-meter races he's entered in, it won't be because he focuses on specific benchmarks.

"The skating is coming together, especially over this past week. Just tightening up on some of my weaknesses and I plan to just execute what I've been working on in practice," Griffin said. "I've been feeling really fast in practice, so if I can execute those things well (today), when it counts, I think the time should take care of itself."

Griffin, a 27-year-old who attended Summit School and Reynolds High School, will race in two 500-meter races today and in the 1,000-meter event Sunday. He's been on the Long Track Fall World Cup roster in each of the past three years and is looking to continue dropping his times. To do that, he'll avoid fixating on them.

"Technically I feel stronger and more connected into my skating than I have in the past," Griffin said. "I try to not really focus too much on where I'm from or where I'm going, I try to dial in with gut feeling in the moment.

"In a sport that you know is against the clock and you know every little tenth of a second, hundredth of a second matters, I just try to dial in, get a feeling, get technique. Obviously I feel stronger than I have in the past."

Anything in less than 35 seconds in the 500 would be a personal record. Griffin's record in the 1,000 is 1:08.9, so he said the goal there is anything "in the low 1:08s."

Based on how he has been practicing, especially for the past week, he said, those marks are within his grasp.

"When I try to put a time on what I want to do, like if I say, 'I want to skate a 34.5 in tomorrow's 500,' and I try to go out and skate that time, it usually doesn't happen. I usually skate a little too tense or put myself under mental stress that is unnecessary," Griffin said. "I really just try to go out and execute what I want to in the race and usually if I execute a good race, then the time will come."

Having practiced well for the past week, Griffin knows that's a good sign. But he's also aware that the feeling today will bring will be different.

"I think practice is a good foundation to kind of base where you're at. But in a sport that's so technical, it's good to at least feel good at practice," Griffin said. "Obviously it's hard to simulate what it's like in a race. The atmosphere is different, the adrenaline is different.

"You have a pair (of competitors) with you that can push you maybe a little harder than you can push yourself in training."

Meet the U.S. Speed Skating team for the fall World Cup series

<http://www.nbcolympics.com/news/meet-us-speed-skating-team-fall-world-cup-series>

For the 15 speed skaters named to the U.S.' fall World Cup team, the road to PyeongChang goes through the Netherlands, Norway, Canada and Utah this fall. Those are the four hosts of the World Cup competitions which will determine how many country quota spots the U.S. will earn for the 2018 Winter Olympics.

U.S. Speed Skating announced the roster for the fall World Cup series on Tuesday, two days after the World Cup Qualifier wrapped up at the Utah Olympic Oval. Of the 15 skaters selected to be on the experienced squad, 10 are already Olympians.

Here's what to know about the athletes representing the U.S. at the fall World Cup series.

Shani Davis

The most decorated athlete on the roster is four-time Olympic medalist Davis, who has been competing on the World Cup circuit for over 10 years. Davis won his first Olympic medals, 1000m gold and 1500m silver, at the 2006 Torino Olympics, and turned in another two-medal performance (again 1000m gold and 1500m silver) at the 2010 Vancouver Olympics. He fell short of the podium at the 2014 Sochi Olympics and left emptyhanded. At the World Cup Qualifiers, Davis finished fourth in three races: the 500m #1, 1000m and 1500m.

Jonathan Garcia

Garcia earned a spot on his first World Cup team in 2012, then made the U.S. Olympic speed skating team two years later. Garcia competed in the 1000m distance in Sochi and finished 28th. At the World Cup Qualifiers, Garcia finished second in the 500m #1 and #2 as well as in the 1000m.

Brian Hansen

Two-time Olympian Hansen earned a silver medal in the team pursuit at the 2010 Vancouver Olympics, and finished in the top 10 in all three of his events at the 2014 Sochi Olympics. After Sochi, Hansen took two years off from skating to earn a degree in business from the University of Colorado, Boulder, but returned to training last season. Hansen finished second in the 1500m and third in the 1000m at the World Cup Qualifiers.

Emery Lehman

Lehman was the youngest U.S. male athlete at the 2014 Sochi Olympics. Now 21 years old, Lehman is one of America's strongest distance skaters and finished first in the 5000m and 10,000m races at the World Cup Qualifiers. He's also the reigning national champion in the longest distance on the Olympic program, the 10,000m.

Joey Mantia

Mantia was the only U.S. man to win a medal at the 2017 World Single Distance Speed Skating Championships: a gold in the mass start. Mantia, also a 2014 Olympian, looked to still be in world champion shape at the World Cup Qualifiers, winning both mass start races as well as notching victories in the 1000m and 1500m races.

Jeffrey Swider-Peltz, Jr.

Swider-Peltz is the only man on the team without Olympic experience, but speed skating at the Winter Games are in his blood: his mother, Nancy Swider-Peltz, is a former speed skater who competed at four Olympics from 1976 to 1988. He earned his spot on the World Cup team by finishing second in mass start #2 race at the Qualifiers.

Mitch Whitmore

Whitmore is a sprinter who holds the American record in the 500m. Unsurprisingly, the two-time Olympian won both of the 500m races at the World Cup Qualifiers, and posted a season-best time of 34.75 in the 500m #2.

Petra Acker

Acker competed at the 2010 and 2014 U.S. Olympic Trials, but didn't make either Olympic team. Her run at the 2018 Winter Games is looking more likely to have a happy ending, as she made her world championship debut in 2017 and competed at last year's World Cup series. At the Qualifiers, Acker finished second in the 5000m, third in the 3000m and fifth in the 1500m.

Heather Bergsma

Bergsma has become one of the most dominant female speed skaters in the world in the years since Sochi, and her performance at the World Cup Qualifiers showed she's still a heavy favorite to win nearly everything she races. The reigning world champion in the 1000m and 1500m claimed victory in both those races this past weekend, as well as the 500m and mass start races. Bergsma is a two-time Olympian who has yet to win any Olympic medals, but her recent accomplishments include winning the overall World Cup title last season.

Brittany Bowe

Bowe missed out on most of last season due to a concussion she sustained in the summer of 2016. Bowe's long recovery looks to be nearing completion based on this past weekend's races: she finished in the top three in all four of her races, and finished just .03 seconds behind Bergsma in the 1000m...

Kelly Gunther

A member of the 2014 Olympic team, Gunther took time off from skating after Sochi (and adopted a black lab named Sochi) before returning to the ice. At the World Cup Qualifiers, Gunther finished fourth in the 500m #2, and sixth in the 500m #1, 1000m and 1500m.

Mia Manganello

Manganello continues her comeback to the ice after missing the 2010 Olympic team and spending nearly six years as a competitive cyclist. Manganello won the 3000m race and finished third in the 1500m at the World Cup Qualifiers.

Carlijn Schoutens

Schoutens is a newcomer to Team USA: while she was born in the U.S., she grew up in the Netherlands and competed for them until she returned to the states in 2014. The distance specialist won the 5000m and placed second in the 3000m at the World Cup Qualifiers.

Paige Schwartzburg

This will be Schwartzburg's third season on the World Cup circuit. At the World Cup Qualifiers she turned in two fourth place finishes, in the 1500m and 1000m. She also finished eighth and then seventh in the two 500m races.

Sugar Todd

Another 2014 Olympian, Todd finished in the top three in all of her events at the World Cup Qualifiers: second in the 500m #1, then third in the 500m #2 and third in the 1000m.