

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.

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 late 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>

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.”

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.

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 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.

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."

ARTICLES FROM AFTER TRIALS

Love of speed skating passed from father to sons

<http://kxan.com/2017/12/21/road-to-the-olympics-love-of-speed-skating-passed-from-father-to-sons/>

PARK CITY, UT (Nexstar) — Speedskating is a passion that runs deep in the Kooreman family.

Pete Kooreman received some attention in 1990 in West Michigan as a local minister with a love for the sport. At the time, he mentioned that he had some children that were interested in it.

That interest has blossomed into lead roles in the U.S. Olympic Team that will be traveling to PyeonChang for the 2018 Winter Olympics.

Matt Kooreman is the head coach of the U.S. long track team. "It's a complete honor to represent Team U.S.A.," he said.

His brother, Mike, will be joining him on the trip as a team leader.

"I think just that passion that he had for the sport really kind of carried over," Matt Kooreman said.

His brother make shared the same sentiment.

"One hundred percent it was always a supportive, nurturing thing," Mike Kooreman said.

Although Matt Kooreman has turned into an important figure for American speedskating, it took some nurturing to continue to get him to put on the blades.

While he always loved to skate, he had a bit of an issue with the wardrobe.

"When you're learning and you're in tights, you look silly and you're in tights," he said. "Not the best combination."

However, a thirst for competition and some early success helped him get over the hurdle of self-consciousness. Now that he is a coach, he is tasked with getting his athletes over the hurdles they face.

"Really what I do, I think, is more (like a) sports psychologist than anything else," Matt Kooreman said.

The brothers are very close and treasure the opportunity to share this moment each other other.

"It's awesome that Mike's there," Matt Kooreman said. "I've counted on him for advice through the years as I've started coaching on this team and even years before coaching on different levels. When times are a little stressful and people aren't performing, he's there for me as my brother but also on a professional level. It's kind of a cool combination I get to have."

Team USA's Top 17 Men Of 2017

<https://www.teamusa.org/News/2017/December/28/Team-USAs-Top-17-Men-of-2017>

Joey Mantia, Long Track Speedskating

Talk about being leader of the pack: [Mantia emerged from the mass start at the World Single Distances Championships as the new world champion](#) in an event that will be held for the first time at an Olympic Games in PyeongChang. Mantia, a Florida native and former inline skater whose résumé in that sport includes 28 world titles, packed his bags and headed west to train with the best on ice beginning in 2010. He's found that the chaos of mass start, where up to two dozen skaters jockey simultaneously for position, suits him because it resembles inline skating. [Mantia then kicked off the 2017-18 season with world cup silver in the mass start](#) and a [silver in the 1,500 the following week](#).

Team USA's Top 17 Women Of 2017

<https://www.teamusa.org/News/2017/December/26/Team-USAs-Top-17-Women-Of-2017>

Heather Bergsma, Long Track Speedskating

Bergsma, a former inline speedskater, has come a long way from her wobbly beginnings in the sport, which once led a coach to liken her to "Bambi on ice." The 2010 and 2014 Olympian collected a trio of medals at this year's World Single Distances Championships: [gold in the 1,000](#) and [1,500-meter, where she is the world-record holder](#), and [bronze in the mass start](#). She also [earned silver at the world sprint championships](#) and was crowned grand world cup champion. The secret to her success? It might have something to do with living and training in the Netherlands, the only nation with more Olympic gold medals than the U.S. Bergsma moved there in 2014 to be with her husband Jorrit, the reigning Olympic champion in 10,000-meter.

With Dan Jansen's Help, Speedskater Mitch Whitmore Gearing Up For Perhaps His Best Performance Yet At Olympic Trials

<https://www.teamusa.org/News/2017/December/28/With-Dan-Jansens-Help-Mitch-Whitmore-Gearing-Up-For-His-Best-Performance-Yet-At-Olympic-Trials>

Mitch Whitmore isn't just racing the clock. He's racing the calendar.

Whitmore, the best men's 500-meter sprinter on the U.S. long track speedskating team, thought he broke his wrist when he flipped over the handlebars of his bike on a training ride last August in Montana.

It turned out his wrist wasn't the problem.

"The trainers were like, 'Oh, your tailbone's probably bruised. You fell on it pretty hard,'" Whitmore said. "I had road rash and stuff, but didn't think really anything of it. I finished the bike camp and then we got back and I'm like, 'Wow. It really hurts to skate.'"

An MRI showed that Whitmore had broken his sacrum in five different places. Meaning "holy bone" in medieval Latin, the sacrum is a large wedge-shaped vertebra at the end of the spine and just above the coccyx (tailbone).

Considering the way speedskaters stay down in position on the ice and the explosiveness required at the start, a broken sacrum is particularly painful.

"You can't do anything for it," said Whitmore, who set the American record of 34.19 seconds two years ago. "It just had to heal on its own."

He missed more than a month of training in the most critical part of the year.

"It's tough because it's Olympic season and you want everything to be perfect," said Whitmore, who will race in the U.S. Olympic Team Trials for Long Track Speedskating in Milwaukee Jan. 2-7 in a bid to make his third straight Olympic team.

"You know, everybody has their things they have to overcome, so I'm just trying to make the best of mine."

His mentor can certainly relate. Gold medalist Dan Jansen, who has been working with Whitmore for about three years, persevered through heartbreak, bad luck, near misses and crushing disappointment to finally win the 1,000-meter at the Olympic Winter Games Lillehammer 1994.

He believes Whitmore, a fellow Wisconsin native, has enough time to get back up to speed for his next Olympic moment.

Whitmore placed 37th in Vancouver in 2010 and 27th in Sochi in 2014, and thought this was his year after finishing fourth in the 500 at the 2017 world championships.

"He still needs some power work, but now he's able to do it," Jansen said. "So, yeah, he's got two months. He's fine."

The men's 500 is one of the later speedskating events at the Olympic Winter Games PyeongChang 2018, taking place on Feb. 19.

Whitmore, who turned 28 on Dec. 18, was only 4 years old when Jansen prevailed in his fourth Winter Games, but he has seen the film.

“Plenty (of times),” Whitmore said. “I still get goosebumps watching it.”

He and Jansen had crossed paths over the years at events and clinics. After Sochi, Jansen offered to work with the promising skater “and he took me up on it.”

They mainly focus on Whitmore’s power and acceleration. Jansen critiques video that Whitmore sends from practices or competition, and Whitmore has trained at Jansen’s home in North Carolina. “He’s definitely helped with getting more power into the ice,” Whitmore said. “He’s great for bouncing ideas off of technically, plus also the mental aspect. He’s been super supportive and helped me each weekend just think about the right things. It’s been an honor to have somebody like that in my corner and helping me out.”

Away from the ice, they hang out in the hot tub and played golf before Whitmore’s injury. “We did some stairs and it was cool to see he can still move pretty good,” Whitmore said.

Jansen said Whitmore is a good student. “He takes everything in, so he knows what he has to work on and he’s been working hard,” Jansen said. “I just wish this didn’t happen, but it did.”

They had just finished a long weekend of training in North Carolina when Whitmore left for the camp where he had the bike crash.

“Somebody in front of me stood up,” Whitmore said, “and I was looking down and I just ran into the back of him.”

He could do only limited training for six weeks while he recuperated. Once Whitmore’s sacrum was healed, he ramped back up, trying to make up for lost time. At first, Whitmore wore shorts instead of a speedsuit so he wouldn’t be tempted to go fast.

“I’d say there was no one day where it was awesome,” Whitmore said, “but each day it just progressively got better.”

He returned to competition for the world cup qualifier in October and made it to the world cup circuit. In his most recent 500s in Kearns, Utah, Whitmore placed eighth (34.38 seconds) and ninth (34.34), his fastest times of the season.

Jansen was in Kearns to see for himself how Whitmore was doing.

“What I saw today was awesome,” Jansen said after the first race. “He looked very good, better than I thought he would.”

In the men’s 500, most of the top skaters are bunched within three-tenths of a second of each other. “There’s at least eight guys who can be on the podium on any day and he’s certainly one of them,” Jansen said. “I think it’s a good thing for him because he’s not seeing anybody who’s a half second ahead of him where you think, ‘There’s no way I can make that time up.’”

Whitmore was encouraged by how fast he skated the opening 100 meters in December in Calgary, Alberta, and then Kearns a week later.

“That’s something that’s actually progressing faster than I thought,” Whitmore said. “I was kind of surprised to see 9.7 (second splits), so that gives me some confidence to get into the 9.6s, which I’ve only done one time ever. So if I can do that, I can win.”

Matt Kooreman, the national sprint team coach agrees.

“I think Mitch is primed,” he said. “The placement doesn’t look that great, but when you start looking at the margins of how far behind he is, he’s been closing the gap throughout the world cups. I think in these next couple of months, we’ll be able to continue that and end up being on top.”

Early in his career, Whitmore placed sixth in the 10,000-meter at the 2006 US Speedskating Championships, but then the sprints won him over. He was the 2009 world junior champ in the 500.

What does Whitmore like about his sport’s shortest race?

“It’s over fast,” he said with a laugh. “No... The reason I got into skating was going as fast as I can and feeling, especially the second corner, just how many g-forces are on your body. You’re trying to hold on for dear life and you’re going as fast as you can.

Speedskaters can reach speeds of over 40 mph. “It’s scary,” Whitmore said, “but also exhilarating.” And he’s grateful to finally be able to go that fast again.

Teammate Jonathan Garcia said it has been “awesome to see him come back. I think he’s right where he needs to be in the 500. I’m thrilled for him. He’s worked really hard and he’s super talented and super dedicated, and I don’t know very many people that deserve it more than he does.”

U.S. long track speedskaters aiming to put the drama behind them in Pyeongchang

<https://www.sltrib.com/sports/2018/01/02/us-long-track-speedskaters-aiming-to-put-the-drama-behind-them-in-pyeongchang/>

Kearns • The three words have stayed on the whiteboard inside his office since early June. It has not only become a mantra around the Utah Olympic Oval ever since, but it has served as the daily reminder of what's around the corner. The story, told to the athletes this summer by former Olympic speedskater and medalist Joey Cheek, was about a Japanese skater who, in the months leading up to the 2002 Olympic Winter Games in Salt Lake City, trained every day in the wardrobe he'd eventually wear at the Games.

His hood was on.

His glasses, too.

While others were training more nonchalantly, Cheek explained, the Japanese skater didn't break character. When Cheek asked him what prompted the approach to training, he told him, "Every day Olympics."

Morris, the executive director of U.S. Speedskating, tells the story as if it was his. That's why he wrote the phrase on the whiteboard in his office that overlooks the track in Kearns. "Bring it every day," Morris said. "That's the focus."

Morris repeats it once more: "Every day Olympics. Show the hunger and desire."

At the conclusion of this week's Olympic long-track team trials in Milwaukee, Wisc., U.S. Speedskating will have its crew for Pyeongchang, South Korea, finalized. The U.S. short-track team was cemented at the Oval two weeks ago. Now a mere month out of the 2018 Olympic Games, the program finally has its shot of erasing the nightmares of what transpired four years ago in Sochi, Russia.

For the first time in 30 years, U.S. long-track was shut out of Olympic medals. In all, U.S. Speedskating boarded the long flight home from Russia with a single medal in hand, a silver in the men's 5,000-meter relay in short track.

"Incredibly difficult," Morris said.

There was drama surrounding the speedskating suits in Sochi. Athletes blamed poor performances on the suits they'd never competed in before Russia. They were supposed to give them an edge, but it became a source of contention. Prior to the 2014 Games, the long-track team had accumulated 28 World Cup medals that season.

They were rolling. Then it all splintered apart in Sochi. That led to an extensive investigation within the governing body of how things spiraled on the world's stage.

Coaching staffs were replaced. New training techniques implemented. One of the most important takeaways from the review was that World Cup medals are great, but Olympic medals are even shinier. Individual athletes were given long-term plans for peaking at the right moment. Meaning being at their top speed in January and February in an Olympics year — not in the fall somewhere on a World Cup stage.

“We’ve done a good job of incorporating that philosophy and making sure we’re going to peak at the right time and get to be physically-ready, mentally-ready and hopefully, most importantly, healthy,” Morris said, “because that’s such a big part of it, too.”

During the World Cup stop in Kearns in December, long-track contender Joey Mantia finished fourth in the men’s 1,500-meter event. Morris said he hit his goal time. The analytics from the spring said that fourth-place time would have likely earned Mantia a World Cup gold based on the tapering process. Instead, he was fourth.

“You really have to step it up in the Olympic Games and skate super, super fast,” Morris said. “And you don’t know who is going to podium. I think times have shown, it’s not necessarily the guys who are on the podium in December.”

Mantia doesn’t hold back recalling the pain of Sochi.

“[It is] like a crack in the boat,” he explained, “things just slowly start filling up, and before you know, it you’re capsized.”

In the years since, Mantia said the team had no choice but to face its failings, embrace it and find a way to use it in a way to motivate toward Pyeongchang.

“It’s not the end of the world,” Mantia said. “It’s really crappy, it sucks. But at the same time, are you going to dwell on it? No. You’re going to get asked a lot about it, be prepared, but it is what it is. People fail all the time, but it’s all about how you handle yourself after that and you come back stronger.”

The charge into Sochi proved that momentum doesn’t mean much in an Olympics calendar year. The Americans are hoping that’s the case. The whole point of tapering, planning to hit high-end speed at the right time, to get the muscle memory down for that certain time of year, is upon them. After being shut out of medals at the World Cup stop in Utah last month, Olympian Jonathan Garcia explained how for a moment, he was concerned that he might win the men’s 1,000-meter event. His personal-best finish that day was good enough for seventh overall.

Because, after all, that wasn’t part of the plan.

“I really have to make sure I need to strategically place myself in where I need to be throughout the season,” Garcia said last month, “[and] just put myself in the best position possible for February.” The headliners remain, for the most part, the same. They’ll compete at the Pettit National Ice Center to determine Olympic spots for the first time in 20 years. The decision to return to Wisconsin is to best replicate what the skaters will face in Pyeongchang — racing at sea level, something the team didn’t do in the trials four years ago, competing in Kearns ahead of Sochi, which was near sea level as well. World-record holder and World Champions Heather Bergsma highlights the women’s side. Since Sochi, she’s relocated to live and train full-time in the Netherlands. Her husband, Jorrit, is part of the Dutch national team. Bergsma won the 1,000 and 1,500-meter events at last year’s World Championships in Pyeongchang. Brittany Bowe endured nearly 18 months off the ice due to severe post-concussion syndrome, but is inching her way back.

Bowe said recently that she was “grateful to have the opportunity to put my skates on and give my hardest effort every day. I really want to go into this season and skate each race to the best of my ability. Of course I want to win every race and I want to be on top of that Olympic podium, but I’m not going to do that unless I skate within myself.”

Olympic legend Shani Davis, now 35, is pushing for another appearance. Along with Mantia and Garcia are contenders Brian Hansen and Mitch Whitmore.

“Pyeongchang is our chance to redeem ourselves,” Mantia said, “and show really we’re not going to make the same mistakes twice.”

Morris said in the seasons since Sochi, the athletes have bought into the new approach. There is no bickering about haves-and-have-nots, he added. This generation of speedskaters is determined to ensure what transpired in Russia is not part of their lasting Olympic legacy. The post-Olympic review, the organization believes, checked all the boxes and has since given athletes and coaches alike the tools to rise in South Korea.

“I can’t wait for them to leave the Olympics with a big smile on their face and admiration and attention they deserve,” Morris said, “and people talking about them for the right reasons.”

Shani Davis qualifies for fifth straight Winter Olympics

<https://theundefeated.com/whhw/shani-davis-qualifies-for-fifth-straight-winter-olympics/>

Speedskater Shani Davis, the first African-American to win an individual gold medal at the Winter Olympics, qualified for Team USA on Wednesday, marking his fifth straight appearance at the Winter Games.

Davis finished second (1:09.23) in the 1,000-meter race at the Olympic trials in Milwaukee, solidifying his spot on the team ahead of February's games in Pyeongchang, South Korea.

Joey Mantia, a 2014 Olympian, came in first (1:09.15), and two-time Olympian Mitch Whitmore rounded out the top three (1:09.31).

A Chicago native, Davis began roller skating at 2 years old, eventually leading to his making the U.S. junior national team in 1999 at age 16. In 2002, he made his first Olympics as an alternate for the short track team. Four years later, he placed first in the men's 1,000 meters, becoming the first black athlete from any country to win an individual gold medal at the Winter Olympics, and second in the men's 1,500 meters. In 2010, he won another gold (1,000-meter) and silver (1,500-meter) medal, and Davis is a seven-time world champion in both events.

Davis is one of the best-known black Winter Olympians, joined by bobsledder Vonetta Flowers, the first black Olympian to win a gold medal (in a team event), and figure skater Debi Thomas, the first African-American to medal at the Winter Olympics.

Other black athletes joining Davis in Pyeongchang will be hockey player [Jordan Greenway](#), the first African-American to play for Team USA; the Nigerian women's bobsled team, the first team from an African nation to qualify in the event; and fellow American speedskater Maame Biney, 17, who in December became the first black woman to qualify for a U.S. speedskating team.

Davis, who turned 35 in August, recently [told the Team USA website](#) that he plans to continue racing until he can no longer skate.

"I just don't recover the same," he said. "But I still love the sport of speedskating and I always find a challenge in competing and trying to be the best I can be. So as long as I have that in me, age doesn't mean a thing."

Chicagoan Shani Davis makes fifth straight Olympics

<http://www.chicagotribune.com/sports/international/ct-spt-olympic-speedskating-trials-20180103-story.html>

[Shani Davis](#) still has his poker face.

The 35-year-old Chicagoan said for the first time in his legendary speedskating career, he has allowed himself to think about failing as a means for motivation. So before he lined up for the 1,000-meter race Wednesday night at the U.S. Olympic long-track team trials — a chance to qualify for his fifth straight Olympic Games — he thought about what would happen if he didn't make the team. "I was all kinds of stressed out about it," he said. "You would never see it on me. I'm smooth like that." Davis laughed but then revealed what earned him another career milestone.

"I just reminded myself how much work (I have done), how much experience I have," he said. Davis' time of 1 minute, 9.22 seconds was second best of the day at Pettit National Ice Center, giving him one of three available spots on the U.S. men's team for this event. He sat on a bench in the infield as the final pairing skated with an NBC camera trained on him. He smiled as several teammates approached him for a congratulatory hug when it was clear his time was good enough to compete in Pyeongchang, South Korea.

"As you can see, my teammates are extremely strong and fast," he said. "I never used to worry about these things when I was young. It was more of an automatic thing. Today I found myself thinking what would happen if I wasn't going to make the team. You should never think negative. But I went out there and fought like it was the last race of my career."

Davis is a four-time Olympic medalist, winning two gold medals in the 1,000 meters. He became the first black athlete to win a gold medal at the [Winter Olympics](#) in an individual event at the 2006 Games in Turin, Italy, at age 24. He repeated as 1,000-meter gold medalist in 2010 in Vancouver.

Like the rest of the U.S. speedskating team, Davis did not medal at the 2014 Olympics in Sochi, Russia. His best World Cup finish in the 1,000 meters this season was 12th place.

"I've been making Olympic teams since I was 18, 19 years old," he said. "I'm just honored I can still be strong enough at this day and age with all the things going on with me and my skating — the ups and downs — just being able to keep a solid head and staying motivated and believing in myself and not being easily discouraged or easily defeated or giving up. I'm really proud of myself."

Davis also will compete at the Olympic trials this week in the 1,500 meters and 500 meters. In the 1,000 meters, he finished behind winner Joey Mantia's time of 1:09.14. Mitchell Whitmore became the third member to qualify for the U.S. in the event, finishing in 1:09.3.

In the women's 1,000 meters, Heather Bergsma qualified for her third straight Olympics with a winning time of 1:14.82., and Brittany Bowe finished second in 1:15.52 to fill the qualifying spots. Third-place finisher Mia Manganello (1:18.23) did not earn a spot on the team because she did not reach the Olympic qualifying time of 1:18. U.S. Speedskating may nominate fourth-place finisher Jerica Tandiman because although she did not earn the qualifying time at the trials she did clock a qualifying time at an approved event earlier in the season.

Heather Bergsma, Brittany Bowe finish 1-2 in 1,000 meters to earn U.S. Olympic speedskating berths

http://www.espn.com/olympics/speedskating/story/_/id/21953780/heather-bergsma-brittany-bowe-finish-1-2-1000-earn-us-olympic-berths?device=featurephone

MILWAUKEE -- Heather Bergsma won the 1,000 meters at the U.S. speedskating trials, with Brittany Bowe finishing second to join her longtime rival on the Olympic team.

Bergsma was timed in 1:14.82 to make her third Olympic team. She has yet to win a medal.

"I'm happy to have the first one out of the way," she said. "It was a tough one, for sure."

Bowe was clocked in 1:15.52. The former college basketball point guard overcame walking pneumonia last fall during the World Cup season.

"A big relief," she said. "Nobody has an easy ride. Everybody has something going on."

Bergsma married Dutch speedskater Jorrit Bergsma in 2015 and relocated to the Netherlands, ending the training and roommate situation she and Bowe had shared.

"I definitely want to be back on that stage with her battling, a couple hundredths, tenths," Bowe said. "I don't like to see my time that far behind, but it is what it is. She's skating awesome. Hopefully we can both find ourselves on the podium in South Korea."

Mia Manganello finished third at 1:18.23, but because she hasn't met the Olympic qualifying time of 1:18.00, she cannot qualify to compete in South Korea. A U.S. Speedskating spokesman said the governing body's rules state an athlete must meet the time standard by the end of Olympic trials, which contradicted earlier information provided by Chris Needham, chairman of the organization's long track task force.

As a result, fourth-place finisher Jerica Tandiman will be nominated for the Olympic team, but won't necessarily skate the 1,000 in Pyeongchang. The U.S. is qualifying team spots for the Olympics and can determine who skates which events later.

Manganello missed qualifying in the 3,000 on Tuesday when she finished second. The U.S. only has one spot in that event for the Olympics.

High Point's Heather Richardson Bergsma makes her third Winter Olympic Games

http://www.greensboro.com/sports/recreation/high-point-s-heather-richardson-bergsma-makes-her-third-winter/article_d2ac87b2-4dba-582a-af16-927b8c03c830.html

MILWAUKEE — Heather Richardson Bergsma will be a three-time Olympian.

The High Point, N.C., native qualified for her third U.S. Olympic speedskating team by winning the 1,000 meters race at the U.S. trials tonight at the Pettit National Ice Center.

Bergsma, who finished in one minute, 14.78 seconds, is the reigning world champion in the event and will be a medal favorite at the Winter Olympics Feb. 9-25 in Pyeongchang, South Korea.

"At a world level, the Japanese are dominating everything," Bergsma told NBC Sports' Steve Sands after her race. "The target is on their back. We're trying to qualify and be at our best in February."

Bergsma, 28, will be joined on the U.S. team in the event by Brittany Bowe (1:15.52) and likely by third-place finisher Mia Manganello (1:18.23).

Her spot gives Guilford County a Winter Olympics speedskater in a fifth straight Games. Greensboro, N.C., native Joey Cheek, who is in Milwaukee working as an analyst for NBC Sports, won a bronze medal in the 1,000 at the Salt Lake Olympics in 2002 then won a silver in the 1,000 and a gold in the 500 at the Turin Olympics in 2006.

Bergsma competed in the 2010 Winter Olympics in Vancouver and in the 2014 Games in Sochi, Russia. Bergsma will be seeking her first Olympic medal in a career that has been filled with 85 medals from World Cup events and a grand champion title in 2016-17.

"I just learned to focus on myself more," Bergsma told NBC Sports. "I try not to worry about the result and just skate and have fun. And whatever that puts me is where it puts me."

Bergsma is scheduled to compete in the 500 meters on Friday, the 1,500 on Saturday and the mass start on Sunday. She can be hopeful that the crowd at Pettit, which was sold out tonight, can bring the same energy.

"I was downstairs for the (men's) 1,000 because I wanted to relax," Bergsma told NBC Sports. "But all I could hear was the crowd, and I'm like, 'What's going on? What's going on?' But it's really awesome here."

The High Point Central alumna lives in Alderboarn, Netherlands, with her husband, Dutch Olympic gold medalist Jorrit Bergsma.

Joey Mantia, Shani Davis go 1-2 at trials to earn Olympic berths

http://www.espn.com/olympics/speedskating/story/_/id/21953327/joey-mantia-shani-davis-go-1-2-1000-meters-us-speedskating-trials?device=featurephone

MILWAUKEE -- Joey Mantia won the 1,000 meters at the U.S. speedskating trials, while two-time Olympic champion Shani Davis is headed to his fourth games.

Mantia finished in 1 minute, 9.15 seconds Wednesday night. The former inline skater from Florida finished 15th in the event four years ago in Sochi.

Skating in the third-to-last pairing, Davis clocked 1:09.23 to finish second. Mitch Whitmore was third at 1:09.32 to grab the third Olympic berth.

Davis is the world-record holder in the 1,000, and won the event at the 2006 and 2010 Olympics. The 35-year-old skater was eighth in Sochi, where the Americans were shut out of medals.

The women's 1,000 was later Wednesday, with three Olympic spots at stake.

Shani Davis makes one more Olympic speed skating team

<http://olympics.nbcsports.com/2018/01/03/shani-davis-speedskating-olympic-trials/>

Shani Davis is going to another Olympics, looking to add to his four speed skating medals. The 35-year-old finished second in the 1000m at the Olympic Trials in West Allis, Wis., on Wednesday to take one of up to three U.S. spots in the event in PyeongChang next month.

“I never used to worry about these things when I was young. Of course, it was more of an automatic thing,” Davis said. “Today, I was thinking what would happen if I wasn’t going to make the team. ... I went out there and fought like it was the last race of my career.”

Sochi Olympian **Joey Mantia** won the trials 1000m in 1:09.15. Davis was second in 1:09.23, followed by **Mitch Whitmore** in 1:09.31 to likely round out the Olympic team in the event.

Whitmore’s spot will be safe if some men start making the team in multiple events, which is highly expected, to keep the overall men’s roster size to a maximum of eight.

Heather Bergsma and **Brittany Bowe**, who both own 1000m world titles, went one-two in the women’s 1000m at trials later Wednesday to make the Olympic team.

Davis earned Olympic 1000m gold in 2006 and 2010 but finished eighth in Sochi as part of a stunning medal-less performance from the U.S. in its historically most successful Winter Games sport.

“It’s not a passing moment that I don’t think about 2014, but there’s nothing I can do about it now,” he said in 2016.

Davis rebounded from Sochi to earn a surprise world 1000m title in 2015, a crown that helped convince him not to retire. He has struggled since, finishing 12th, 12th, 13th and 14th in four World Cup 1000m races this season.

“I’m not a middle-type-of-the-pack skater,” Davis said in 2015, before his bounce-back world title. “If I’m not competitive with the rest of the world, and I’m sixth and seventh and eighth, whatever, then it’s not for me. I can happily move on.”

Davis also owns Olympic 1500m silver medals from 2006 and 2010 and will race that event at trials on Saturday. Again, the top three are in line to make the Olympic team.

He entered trials as the third-fastest U.S. man in both the 1000m and 1500m this season.

“I think I can put myself in the higher rankings worldwide, not just in America,” Davis said. “I still want to be the fastest speed skater in the world.”

Up to 16 skaters could qualify for the Olympic team at trials with the best medal hopes in the 1000m, 1500m and mass start.

Carlijn Schoutens wins 3000m at the U.S. Olympic Speed Skating Trials

<http://www.nbcolympics.com/news/carlijn-schoutens-wins-3000m-us-olympic-speed-skating-trials>

23-year-old Carlijn Schoutens became the first champion at the U.S. Olympic Speed Skating Trials when she earned the fastest time in the women's 3000m.

With a time of 4:14:022, Schoutens was the fastest by over a second a half. Schoutens was mostly raised in the Netherlands, which is known for being a hotbed of speed skating talent--and as a result, the deepest and most competitive pool of potential Olympic speed skaters. Schoutens came to the U.S., where she was born, in 2014 in hopes of representing Team USA on the Olympic stage.

The U.S. earned only one quota spot in the women's 3000m distance, meaning only the winner of today's race was guaranteed an Olympic berth.

Schoutens is ranked 13th in the 3000m this World Cup season, the only U.S. woman in the top 24. The second-place skater was Mia Manganello, who retired from speed skating after missing out on the Olympic team for the 2010 Vancouver Winter Games. She turned to professional cycling for six years, but decided to get back on the ice in 2015. Manganello will have another chance to make the Olympic team for PyeongChang in the women's 5000m event, which will take place on Thursday.

Manganello's time was 4:15.730, and the third-place finisher, Petra Acker, clocked 4:18.844. In the second event of the day, Emery Lehman finished first in the men's 5000m with a time of 6:27.906. However, the 2014 Sochi Olympian will likely have to win a different race in hopes of making his second Olympic team, since the U.S. men didn't earn any Olympic quota spots in the two distance events, the 5000m and 10,000m.

Bergsma, Mantia Win 1000m On Second Day Of U.S. Olympic Team Trials

<https://www.teamusa.org/US-Speedskating/News/Featured-News/2018/January/03/Bergsma-Mantia-Win-1000m-On-Second-Day-Of-US-Olympic-Team-Trials>

MILWAUKEE, Wisc. – The U.S. Olympic Team Trials - Long Track continued today in front of a second consecutive sellout crowd at the Pettit National Ice Center. Joey Mantia (Ocala, Fla.) and Heather Bergsma (High Point, N.C.) won their respective 1000m races and the top three men and top two women from each distance were named to the 2018 U.S. Olympic Team.

The top three men in the 1000m were separated by just 0.16 seconds with Mantia taking the top spot in 1:09.14.

“That was the tightest race for us for sure,” said Mantia. “The 1000m has legitimately six or seven guys that could actually get the spot. You can’t have a bad one.”

This will be Mantia’s second Olympic Games, as he qualified for the 2014 Winter Games in Sochi. “This has been a big stresser. I feel like there is more pressure for Olympic Trials than there are for the Olympics, honestly. It was the same way last time. The first race going in is nerves at an all-time high,” said Mantia.

Shani Davis (Chicago, Ill.) punched his ticket to his fifth overall Olympic Games, his fourth in long track. The two-time Olympic Champion skated a 1:09.22 in the third to final pairing and had to wait to see if his time would stand.

“I went out there and fought like it was the last race of my career and I was able to get a spot on the team,” said Davis.

“I’m 35 years old. I’ve been making Olympic teams since I was 18, 19-years old, and I’ve had quite the career. I’m just honored to still be strong enough in this day and age. I’ve kept a solid head, stayed motivated and believed in myself. I’m really proud with myself that I was able to do it today.” Wisconsin native Mitch Whitmore (Waukesha, Wisc.) turned in the fastest 600m split for the men in 25.00 seconds to finish in third with a time of 1:09.30. Whitmore qualified for his first 1000m at the Winter Olympics, having skated solely in the 500m during the 2010 and 2014 Games.

“It’s special to go to the Games in the 1000m,” said Whitmore. “I’ve always wanted to and I don’t want to be just a one-race skater.”

Bergsma ran away with the women’s 1000m in a time of 1:14.82. She was the only woman to break the 1:15 mark.

“Now I can breathe a little bit more,” stated Bergsma. “I think I will now be able to have fun and relax this week.”

Bergsma has now made her third U.S. Olympic Team and will also look to qualify in the women’s 500m, 1500m and Mass Start events.

Brittany Bowe (Ocala, Fla.) will be skating in her second Olympic Games after a second-place finish in the women’s 1000m in 1:15.52.

“I’ve had a few really good weeks of training leading up to Trials and I’m happy to have a berth on the Olympic Team,” stated Bowe. “I have a few more races to go this week and then off to Korea.”

For results, post-race interviews and other media information, visit the [US Speedskating Media Page](#).

The entire U.S. Olympic Long Track Speedskating Team will be formally named at the conclusion of the week's races and will consist of a maximum of eight men and eight women skaters, subject to approval by the United States Olympic Committee.

Racing continues on Thursday, January 4 with the women's 5000m and men's 10000m. Live coverage of the races will be on NBCSN beginning at 6:30 p.m. ET.

Quotes from Joey Mantia

- "This has been a big stresser. I feel like there is more pressure for Olympic Trials than there are for the Olympics, honestly. It was the same way last time. The first race going in is nerves at an all time high."
- "That was the tightest race for us for sure. The 1000m has legitimately six or seven guys that could actually get the spot. You can't have a bad one."
- "I'm going to sleep well tonight. Last night I was up at three o'clock, four o'clock and five o'clock, tossing and turning. Just a high-stressed situation and it's tough because it's the Olympics. I've been doing this my whole life, but you never get use to that pressure, especially when the reality is you may not make it because there are six guys that are going for three spots."

Quotes from Shani Davis

- "I went out there and fought like it was the last race of my career and I was able to get a spot on the team."
- "It's nice knowing that the race today wasn't perfect but it was able to get me a spot on the team. I look forward to going up. I know there are some things that I can correct and once I focus on those things, I think I can put myself in higher rankings worldwide. I'm going to work on that, put my heart and soul in that, and skate with my heart."
- "I'm 35 years old. I've been making Olympic teams since I was 18, 19-years old, and I've had quite the career. I'm just honored to still be strong enough in this day and age. I've kept a solid head, stayed motivated and believed in myself. I'm really proud with myself that I was able to do it today."

Quotes from Mitch Whitmore

- "I'm a little shocked. I thought a couple of the other guys were skating really well and they are. I just had a really good race today and I'm super pumped about it."
- "I think I can relax more going into the 500m day knowing that I'm on the team. I'm excited to be doing the 1000m at the Olympics."
- "It's special to go to the Games in the 1000m. I've always wanted to and I don't want to be just a one-race skater."

Quotes from Heather Bergsma

- "It felt really good. I'm happy to have the first one out of the way and I was really happy with my first lap of 27.1 seconds."
- "Now I can breathe a little bit more. I think I will now be able to have fun and relax this week."

Quotes from Brittany Bowe

- "I've had a few really good weeks of training leading up to Trials and I'm happy to have a berth on the Olympic Team. I have a few more races to go this week and then off to Korea."

"I've had to overcome a few battles and hurdles but it's all part of it. No one has an easy ride.

Everyone has something going on whether everyone knows about it or not. I think every skater has had to overcome something and we are all just doing the best we can."

Schoutens Qualifies For Second Olympic Distance At U.S. Olympic Team Trials

<https://www.teamusa.org/US-Speedskating/News/Featured-News/2018/January/04/Schoutens-Qualifies-For-Second-Olympic-Distance-At-US-Olympic-Team-Trials>

MILWAUKEE, Wisc. – The U.S. Olympic Team Trials - Long Track continued today at the Pettit National Ice Center. Carlijn Schoutens (Heemstede, Netherlands) became the first U.S. skater to qualify for multiple distances at the Olympic Winter Games PyeongChang 2018, winning the women's 5000m.

"It's the longest one that we do for women and it's obviously a strain on the legs and it's pretty tough to do, so with only one ticket available I think some people were picking their battles as we have a couple more distances to go," said Schoutens. "For me, it didn't really make a difference, it's only one person and you still have to do the best race possible to get that one ticket."

Skating in the final pair, Schoutens finished 14.23 seconds better than second-place finisher Petra Acker (Saratoga Springs, N.Y.), skating a final time of 7:12.25. Schoutens, a rookie to the Olympic Games, was the first U.S. skater to punch their ticket to PyeongChang, qualifying in the women's 3000m on the first day of Trials.

"Two out of two so far. I'm really happy," said Schoutens. Chase Reichmann (West Allis, Wisc.) became the U.S. men's 10000m National Champion skating a 14.25.97.

"It feels fantastic," said Reichmann. "It's everything I've worked for and I couldn't be happier." Reichmann beat out the oldest competitor of the 2018 U.S. Olympic Team Trials, 53-year-old Theron Sands (Biloxi, Miss.) who finished in 14.35.37.

"I've worked for six years to get to this point," said Sands. "Regardless of the result, I've won. I skated a personal best for this facility today. I'm very happy and feel like I honored my coach who passed away this year."

For results, post-race interviews and other media information, visit the [US Speedskating Media Page](#). The entire U.S. Olympic Long Track Speedskating Team will be formally named at the conclusion of the week's races and will consist of a maximum of eight men and eight women skaters, subject to approval by the United States Olympic Committee.

Racing continues on Thursday, January 4 with the women's 5000m and men's 10000m. Live coverage of the races will be on NBCSN beginning at 6:30 p.m. ET.

The Olympic Winter Games PyeongChang 2018 will be held in South Korea from February 9-25, 2018. Both Long and Short Track will be held in the Gangneung coastal cluster with all Olympic competitions for Long Track Speedskating to be held at the Gangneung Oval, which will have a seating capacity of 8,000.

Quotes from Carlijn Schoutens

- "Two out of two so far. I'm really happy."
- "It's the longest one that we do for women and it's obviously a strain on the legs and it's pretty tough to do, so with only one ticket available I think some people were picking their battles as we have a couple more distances to go. For me, it didn't really make a difference, it's only one person and you still have to do the best race possible to get that one ticket."

Quotes from Chase Reichmann

- “It feels fantastic. It’s everything I’ve worked for and I couldn’t be happier.”
- “I’ve known him (Theron Sands) for a while now. We’ve been training together recently and racing against him is great. He is an extreme competitor and it was a lot of fun being on the ice with him and giving our all.”
- “It’s a hard race. Not many people can do it, a lot of people shy away from it. All of the sprinters see it and it freaks them out, skating 25 laps. I enjoy it. You get into you skating and flow, and really work, work against your bodies physiology. You can feel the burn and really work against it and you work that threshold.”

Quotes from Theron Sands

- “I’ve worked for six years to get to this point. Regardless of the result, I’ve won. I skated a personal best for this facility today. I’m very happy and feel like I honored my coach who passed away this year.”
- “I feel excellent about this day. Just thrilled to be here.”

“I’m an accountant for seven companies. I’m allowed to work remotely too, so when I’m not skating, in the gym, taking an ice bath or eating, I’m trying to get online to get some work done.”

Erin Jackson Makes First Olympic Team On Day Four Of U.S. Olympic Team Trials

<https://www.teamusa.org/US-Speedskating/News/Featured-News/2018/January/05/Erin-Jackson-Makes-First-Olympic-Team-On-Day-Four-Of-US-Olympic-Team-Trials>

MILWAUKEE, Wisc. – The U.S. Olympic Team Trials - Long Track continued today in front of a third sellout crowd at the Pettit National Ice Center. Brittany Bowe (Ocala, Fla.) and Mitch Whitmore (Waukesha, Wisc.) won their respective 500m events, and Erin Jackson (Ocala, Fla.) was named to her first Olympic team.

Skaters raced the 500m twice on Friday, with the best overall times from the day claiming the top spots on the podium.

Whitmore, the American Record holder in the men's 500m, turned in his fastest time in the 500m #1, skating a 35.03.

"Today and Wednesday, there was really good skating in there," said Whitmore. "The slow reaction today on the openers was an area I can work on, but, yeah, the corners were better and the rest of the skating was good."

This marks the second distance that Whitmore has qualified for, as he claimed a spot in the men's 1000m on the second day of completion.

Bowe won both of the women's 500m races and set the fastest time of the day in the first women's 500m in 37.95.

"It felt pretty good," said Bowe. "The first one was obviously a little faster than the second one, but I'm really, really pleased with that performance."

She was followed by Heather Bergsma (High Point, N.C.) in second (38.24) and Jackson in third (39.04). Due to Bowe and Bergsma qualifying for their second distances – both have Olympic spots in the 1000m – Jackson was named to her first Olympic Team.

"It's been a crazy experience," stated Jackson. "Just a couple weeks ago I was in the 40's (seconds in the 500m). I hadn't even broken 40 (seconds) yet. It's all happened really fast. It's crazy."

The transitioning inline skater, set a personal best in both of her 500m races, skating a 39.22 in 500m #1 and 39.04 in 500m #2. Her previous personal best was a 39.51 skated at a time trial in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Dec. 23, 2017. She has been training on ice full time for four months.

"I've been an inline speed skater for 15 years," said Jackson. "I came out to Salt Lake City for the first time in March, well, the end of February into March. Then I went back to inline for the summer and came back to Salt Lake in September, so it's been about four months combined."

After the first men's 500m, Kimani Griffin (Winston-Salem, N.C.) and Jonathan Garcia (Houston, Texas) sat second and third, respectively, behind Whitmore. The two swapped positions when Garcia turned in a 35.22 in his second 500m, bettering Griffin's best time of the day of 35.26. Both of the skaters are in line to earn an Olympic berth depending on available quota spots at the end of Trials.

For results, post-race interviews and other media information, visit the [US Speedskating Media Page](#). The entire U.S. Olympic Long Track Speedskating Team will be formally named at the

conclusion of the week's races and will consist of a maximum of eight men and eight women skaters, subject to approval by the United States Olympic Committee.

Racing continues on Saturday, January 6 with the men's and women's 1500m. Live coverage of the races will be on NBCSN beginning at 6:00 p.m. ET.

The Olympic Winter Games PyeongChang 2018 will be held in South Korea from February 9-25, 2018. Both Long and Short Track will be held in the Gangneung coastal cluster with all Olympic competitions for Long Track Speedskating to be held at the Gangneung Oval, which will have a seating capacity of 8,000.

Quotes from Mitch Whitmore

- "Today and Wednesday, there was really good skating in there. The slow reaction today on the openers was an area I can work on, but, yeah, the corners were better and the rest of the skating was good."
- "I was a little frustrated with the starts today. I thought the first race it was a really long hold and then of course he called it back and then the second one I thought I timed it really well, but turns out I didn't and then, yeah, I was just really slow off the line on that second one. 9.9 is obviously not going to get the job done at the Olympics, but I know what to work on."

Quotes from Erin Jackson

- "I surprised myself a lot. I really wasn't expecting any of this. Just coming in as a newbie trying to do the best that I can. I still don't even know."
- "I've been an inline speed skater for 15 years. I came out to Salt Lake City for the first time in March, well, the end of February into March. Then I went back to inline for the summer and came back to Salt Lake in September, so it's been about four months combined."
- "It's been a crazy experience. Just a couple weeks ago I was in the 40's (seconds in the 500m). I hadn't even broken 40 (seconds) yet. It's all happened really fast. It's crazy."
- "My coach Renee Hildebrand is a pretty famous coach. She has had a lot of athletes who have made it to the Olympic level so a lot of us are from Ocala, Florida where Renee Hildebrand is from. She has raised a lot of us from the ground up. I owe a lot to her."

Quotes from Brittany Bowe

- "It felt pretty good. The first one was obviously a little faster than the second one, but I'm really, really pleased with that performance."

"I'm really happy with how my opening 100 meters are coming along. Obviously, we still have a little bit of work to do on that top end speed for the lap, but really, really pleased and happy with two 500s today."

Five Additional Skaters Named To The 2018 U.S. Olympic Team

<https://www.teamusa.org/US-Speedskating/News/Featured-News/2018/January/06/Five-Additional-Skaters-Named-To-The-2018-US-Olympic-Team>

JAN. 06, 2018, 9:47 P.M. (ET)

The U.S. Olympic Team Trials - Long Track continued today in front of a fourth sellout crowd at the Pettit National Ice Center. Joey Mantia (Ocala, Fla.) and Brittany Bowe (Ocala, Fla.) won their respective men's and women's 1500m events, while five additional athletes were named to the 2018 U.S. Olympic Team.

Mantia set the pace for the men, skating a 1:46.30 in the 1500m. The 2014 Olympian has now qualified for two distances for the 2018 Games, as he won the men's 1000m on the second day of competition.

"It was a much slower race than I thought it would be," said Mantia. "During the race, I knew it was so slow in here and from there, it was just a struggle to finish the race. Despite what it looked like, I was hurting inside."

He will attempt to qualify for his third distance in the Mass Start tomorrow. Bowe claimed the top spot for the women in the 1500m, turning in 1:55.92 to top Heather Bergsma (High Point, N.C.).

"It's always nice to come out on top," stated Bowe. "It's a confidence booster for sure. When we're racing each other, we raise that level of competition – it raises the intensity level, it gets that adrenaline going a little bit more."

The 2015-16 World Champion is now qualified for three Olympic distances, as she also qualified in the women's 500m and 1000m.

Bergsma finished in 1:56.12, and is also now qualified for three Olympic distances – the 500m, 1000m and 1500m. She will attempt to be the only U.S. women to qualify in four distances with the Mass Start tomorrow evening.

Mia Manganello (Crestview, Fla.) claimed her spot on the 2018 U.S. Olympic Team with a third-place finish in the women's 1500m (1:59.28).

"I was pretty much tearing up at the line knowing that if I just skated the best I could, I would probably make it and luckily that day came that I can finally be an Olympian," said Manganello.

The first-time Olympian beat out Carlijn Schoutens (Heemstede, Netherlands) for the final 1500m spot, winning by 0.41 seconds.

"It is everything I thought it would feel like. Surreal. It's a moment I've been dreaming of at least this year for sure, every day, and it's a moment I can't believe is actually true."

Brian Hansen (Glenview, Ill.) secured his third trip to the Winter Games, with a second-place finish in 1:46.64. Skating in the penultimate pair with Emery Lehman (Oak Park, Ill.), Hansen knew he had sealed his fate with the fastest time before the final pair.

“I was nervous all day,” said Hansen. “I don’t think there’s too many situations that I’m going to go through where I feel more pressure than a day like today. I took two years off and after even two years of training it just it feels like everything.”

Shani Davis (Chicago, Ill.) capped off his Olympic Team Trials week with a third place finish in the 1500m in 1:47.15. The two-time Olympic Champion is heading to his fifth Olympic Games and will also be representing the U.S. in the 1000m.

“I’m honored (to be going to my fifth Games),” said Davis. “Twenty years of this is quite substantial when you look at all the time I’ve put into it. I still enjoy it. I’m still trying to be the best I can be and the best speed skater that I can and I’m going to continue to plug away at it.”

With Davis and Mantia doubling up on distances, Jonathan Garcia (Houston, Texas) and Kimani Griffin (Winston-Salem, N.C.) officially sealed their places on the 2018 U.S. Olympic Team. The two skaters finished second and third, respectively, in the men’s 500m on the fourth day of racing.

Jerica Tandiman (Kearns, Utah) was officially named to the 2018 U.S. Olympic Team in the women’s 1000m due to Bergsma and Bowe qualifying in multiple distances. Tandiman, who finished fourth in the event, was moved up to a qualifying position when Manganello did not meet the Olympic time standard.

For results, post-race interviews and other media information, visit the [US Speedskating Media Page](#). The entire U.S. Olympic Long Track Speedskating Team will be formally named at the conclusion of the week’s races and will consist of a maximum of eight men and eight women skaters, subject to approval by the United States Olympic Committee.

Racing will conclude on Sunday, January 7 with the men’s and women’s Mass Start. Live coverage of the races will be on NBCSN beginning at 6:00 p.m. ET.

The Olympic Winter Games PyeongChang 2018 will be held in South Korea from February 9-25, 2018. Both Long and Short Track will be held in the Gangneung coastal cluster with all Olympic competitions for Long Track Speedskating to be held at the Gangneung Oval, which will have a seating capacity of 8,000.

Quotes from Joey Mantia

- “It was a much slower race than I thought it would be. During the race, I knew it was so slow in here and from there, it was just a struggle to finish the race. Despite what it looked like, I was hurting inside.”
- “I’ve felt great at practice, strong, but maybe high pressure is causing the ice to be slow. I wasn’t feeling one hundred percent, but wasn’t feeling bad to go 1:46 (seconds).”

Quotes from Brittany Bowe

- “It’s always nice to come out on top. It’s a confidence booster for sure. When we’re racing each other, we raise that level of competition – it raises the intensity level, it gets that adrenaline going a little bit more.”
- “I would say we both want to win those races and it feels good to come out on top today. I know that next time we’re on the ice together she’s going to have some more fire in her.”

Quotes from Mia Manganello

- “I was pretty much tearing up at the line knowing that if I just skated the best I could, I would probably make it and luckily that day came that I can finally be an Olympian.”
- “Extremely difficult. After the 1,000 it was pretty hard to come out of that one. But luckily I had a couple days of a buffer before the 1,500 today and it just goes back to knowing that if I let it go, skate in the moment, that it was possible.”

- “The most I’ve been all week (nervous). I tried to talk myself down. I knew if I skated to my potential that I would make it and skate a good race. But, there is always the what-ifs you’re feeling, thinking all of those. Luckily I was able to just step away from the mind and the moment and just skate how I needed to skate.”
- “It is everything I thought it would feel like. Surreal. It’s a moment I’ve been dreaming of at least this year for sure, every day, and it’s a moment I can’t believe is actually true.”

Quotes from Brian Hansen

- “I was nervous all day. I don’t think there’s too many situations that I’m going to go through where I feel more pressure than a day like today. I took two years off and after even two years of training it just it feels like everything.”
- “I was so happy that I could go out there and have a good one today and make a third team – a third Olympic team.”

Quotes from Shani Davis

- “I’m honored (to be going to his fifth Games). 20 years of this is quite substantial when you look at all the time I’ve put into it. I still enjoy it. I’m still trying to be the best I can be and the best speed skater that I can and I’m going to continue to plug away at it.”
- “I think I have the tools to be a real threat. For sure in the 1000m and maybe the 1500m. Anything can happen at the Olympics. It’s up to me to make sure I’m prepared properly.”
- “It’s been really nice to have it at the Pettit. I’m from Chicago and a lot of people come up from Chicago to watch and they are very supportive. The people of Wisconsin adopted me as well, kind of like how they did with Bonnie Blair, and they really support and embrace me.”

“It was a decent race. The 700m (split), I was really pleased with because I’ve been struggling a lot earlier in the season with my opening speed plus my 700m split. Today, on worker’s ice, where nothing is free at all, I opened up with 23.7 and 26.0. I think that’s really substantial for me.”

Four Skaters To Represent Team USA At Olympic Mass Start Debut

<https://www.teamusa.org/US-Speedskating/News/Featured-News/2018/January/07/Four-Skaters-To-Represent-Team-USA-At-Olympic-Mass-Start-Debut>

MILWAUKEE, Wisc. – The U.S. Olympic Team Trials - Long Track concluded today at the Pettit National Ice Center. Heather Bergsma (High Point, N.C.) and Joey Mantia (Ocala, Fla.) finished atop the Mass Start rankings and earned the top qualification spots in their respective events, while Mia Manganello (Crestview, Fla.) and Brian Hansen (Glenview, Ill.) claimed the second qualification spots in each gender.

The Mass Start final rankings were determined by using points from three Mass Start races. Two of the races were skated at the 2017-18 Fall World Cup Qualifiers, and the final race was skated at U.S. Olympic Team Trials.

Both Bergsma and Mantia won the first two races that were skated at Fall World Cup Qualifiers. Maria Lamb (St. Paul, Minn.) broke away from the pack with 11 laps to go and held on to win the women's Mass Start race. After the three combined Mass Starts, Lamb missed a qualifying spot in the event, finishing behind Bergsma and Manganello who finished second and third, respectively, in the final race.

Bergsma will be heading to her third Olympic Games, leading the U.S. women by qualifying in four distances – the 500m, 1000m, 1500m and Mass Start.

“Anything can happen at the Olympic Games, that’s why it is so exciting to watch,” said Bergsma. “I have four chances (to get a medal) and I’m going to do my best at all four.” Manganello is now qualified for two Olympic distances, as she claimed a spot in the women’s 1500m on the fifth day of competition.

“After yesterday, today was much more relaxing,” stated Manganello. “I enjoyed this race so much. I knew that if I just stayed on my feet and raced the way I could that I would get another distance.” On the men’s side, Hansen secured his second distance at the Olympics by winning today’s Mass Start. The Olympic silver medalist made the 2018 U.S. Olympic Team the night before when he qualified for the 1500m.

“I’m happy that I was able to pull out the win, and I’m happy to be representing the U.S. at the Olympics in this race, because hopefully I can do something good,” said Hansen. “It’s just one race that you never know what’s going to happen.”

Mantia just needed to finish the race to punch his ticket as the top spot in the men’s Mass Start standings. He ended up fifth overall and will be racing in three distances at the Winter Games – the 1000m, 1500m and Mass Start.

“Every time I step on the ice I want to win, but today I just knew that I needed to finish,” stated Mantia. “That was a big stress-free situation for me. I really wanted to let those guys race it out.” The Ocala native is going to his second Olympic Games and is the only man on the U.S. team to qualify for three distances.

Emery Lehman (Oak Park, Ill.) was named as the men’s Team Pursuit specialist at the conclusion of racing when it was finalized that the U.S. men would not reach their maximum quota of eight spots. This is Lehman’s second Olympic Games, as he skated in the men’s 5000m and 10000m in Sochi.

“I’ve been on pins and needles. You never really know until the weekend is over, especially with how racing goes,” said Lehman. “I knew I still had to come out and race really well, I had to leave it up to US Speedskating to make the decision.”

With the conclusion of the 2018 U.S. Olympic Team Trials, the long track Olympic team will have a week before they return to the Pettit National Ice Center for a two-week Olympic Training Camp, which will be held from Jan. 15-30.

For results, post-race interviews and other media information, visit the [US Speedskating Media Page](#). The entire U.S. Olympic Long Track Speedskating Team will be formally named at the conclusion of the week’s races and will consist of a maximum of eight men and eight women skaters, subject to approval by the United States Olympic Committee.

The Olympic Winter Games PyeongChang 2018 will be held in South Korea from February 9-25, 2018. Both Long and Short Track will be held in the Gangneung coastal cluster with all Olympic competitions for Long Track Speedskating to be held at the Gangneung Oval, which will have a seating capacity of 8,000.

Quotes from Joey Mantia

- “Every time I step on the ice I want to win, but today I just knew that I needed to finish. That was a big stress-free situation for me. I really wanted to let those guys race it out.”
- “It was a fun race and those guys battled it out for the second spot.”
- “You have no idea what’s going to happen with this race. You can kind of anticipate and think so and so is going to do whatever, but when you get out there you have to be completely dynamic. That’s the beauty of this race and the magic behind it.”

Quotes from Heather Bergsma

- “My main goal was to qualify for the Games in four events and that happened, so I’m happy.”
- “Anything can happen at the Olympic Games, that’s why it is so exciting to watch. I have four chances (to get a medal) and I’m going to do my best at all four.”

Quotes from Brian Hansen

- “I’m happy that I was able to pull out the win, and I’m happy to be representing the U.S. at the Olympics in this race, because hopefully I can do something good. It’s just one race that you never know what’s going to happen.”
- “I had four or five strategies that could happen. I fed off those strategies as the race unfolds, I see if we are in a breakaway or just one big group, or, am I tired or fresh. Based off those factors, I make a decision at the end of what I’ll do.”

Quotes from Mia Manganello

- “I knew exactly what I needed to skate and the results I needed to perform and make the team.”
- “After yesterday, today was much more relaxing. I enjoyed this race so much. I knew that if I just stayed on my feet and raced the way I could, that I would get another distance.”

Quotes from Emery Lehman

- “It’s awesome (making the Olympics). Definitely better the second time around than the first time around.”

“I’ve been on pins and needles. You never really know until the weekend is over, especially with how racing goes. I knew I still had to come out and race really well, I had to leave it up to US Speedskating to make the decision.”

FAU's Bowe headed to Olympics again in Speedskating

<http://cbs12.com/sports/content/faus-bowe-headed-to-olympics-again-in-speedskating>

BOCA RATON, Fla. (CBS12) —

FAU grad Brittany Bowe is headed back to the Olympics. The 2010 grad is headed to her second straight winter olympics, as one of just 16 long track speedskaters for Team USA. She will compete in the 500m, 1,000m and 1500m events.

Bowe played hoops in Boca Raton, winning Most Outstanding Female Athlete at FAU as a senior. In her senior season, Bowe dished out 136 assists for the women's basketball team while grabbing 48 steals and 118 rebounds. She ranked second on the team in scoring, averaging 12.2 points per game.

Bowe grew up in Ocala, and would compete in inline skating during the summer while in college. She started focusing on ice after graduation. She has four gold medals in speed skating in world competitions. The 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi, Russia, Bowe finished 13th in the 500m, 8th in the 1000m, and 14th in the 1500m.

The Pyeongchang Games kick off in South Korea on February 9 and will conclude February 25.

Houston's Jonathan Garcia finds stride, makes U.S. Olympic speedskating team

<http://www.chron.com/sports/article/Houston-s-Jonathan-Garcia-finds-stride-makes-12478024.php>

MILWAUKEE — Houston's Jonathan Garcia, who competed in the 2014 Olympics, rebounded from a disappointing first race at the U.S. Speedskating Olympic Trials to clinch a spot on the 2018 team Friday in the 500 meters.

Garcia, 31, was fourth Wednesday at 1,000 meters, one spot away from qualifying, but was second in the shorter sprint to win a spot on the eight-member men's team. He finished in 35.22 seconds, second to 35.03 for Mitch Whitmore of Waukesha, Wis.

Garcia, who was 28th in the 1,000 in the Sochi Winter Olympics, told the Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel he will have to adjust his training regimen to prepare for the shorter race.

"I'll really have to start working on my start," he said. "I really went all-in in the 1,000. I wanted to do the best in that race because that was probably the best (chance) I had of medaling at the Games.

"But I am thankful to be going back to the Olympics for the second time."

Whitmore added the 500 to his schedule after making his third Olympic team in the 1,000.

Erin Jackson surprised herself and almost everyone else, becoming a first-time Olympian after just four months on ice.

Coming from the world of inline skating, Jackson qualified in the 500 meters by finishing third behind veterans Brittany Bowe and Heather Bergsma.

Bowe had the fastest time over two heats. She was quicker in her first run around the big oval, clocking 37.95 seconds. Her second run was 38.18.

Bergsma also was quicker in her first heat at 38.24. Her second trip was 38.42.

Jackson was just the opposite. The 25-year-old skater from Ocala, Fla., went 39.22 in her first heat. She was even better in her second run, going 39.04.

"I really wasn't expecting any of this, just coming in as a newbie, just trying to do the best I can," she said, smiling.

Jackson becomes the third black to make the U.S. speedskating team for the Olympics next month. She joins fellow long-tracker Shani Davis and short-tracker Maame Biney, who is originally from Ghana.

Bowe and Bergsma had earned spots in Pyeongchang by finishing 1-2 in the 1,000, so doubling up in another event cleared the way for Jackson to join.

Her previous personal best was 39.51 on Dec. 23 in Salt Lake City.

"A couple weeks ago, I was still in the 40s," Jackson said. "I think I hadn't even broken 40 (seconds) yet, so it's all happened really fast."

Bowe has been a teammate of Jackson's for years.

"She's improving dramatically every time she steps on that ice," Bowe said.

Blair Cruikshank, the teenage daughter of five-time Olympic champion Bonnie Blair, finished 15th among 18 skaters in the 500. She had identical times of 42.21 in both heats, which was a personal best.

"I'm pretty excited and I'm sure she's over there having a ton of fun also," Blair said of her mom.

Erin Jackson Picked Up Long-Track Speed Skating 4 Months Ago & Now She's Headed To The Olympics

<https://www.essence.com/news/erin-jackson-black-woman-olympics-long-track-speed-skating>

A 25-year-old Florida woman [is set to make history at the Olympics](#) just 4 months after she began training for the sport that's now become her golden ticket the winter games.

Erin Jackson says she was just as surprised as the rest of the world when her final scores during the U.S. Olympic Long-Track Speed Skating Trials landed her a spot on the team.

"I really wasn't expecting any of this, just coming in as a newbie, just trying to do the best I can," she said, according to [NBC Sports](#). "I still don't even know."

Jackson's noteworthy accomplishment makes her the third [Olympic athlete](#) to make the U.S. Speed Skating team and the first Black woman ever to make the Long-Track Speed Skating team. Although she only began taking up long-track speed skating in September 2017, the former University of Florida student has a background as an in-line skater and roller derby athlete.

Jackson placed third in the 500-meter race to land her coveted spot on the national team and her news comes just week after 17-year-old Maame Biney made history as the first Black woman to qualify for any Olympic speed skating team.

The Winter Olympics are set to kick off in Pyeongchang County, South Korea on February 9, 2018.

Ex-inline skater Erin Jackson snags surprise Olympic berth in Speedskating

<http://www.espn.com/olympics/story/ /id/21974792/erin-jackson-wins-spot-us-speedskating-team?device=featurephone>

MILWAUKEE -- Erin Jackson surprised herself and almost everyone else at the U.S. speedskating trials, becoming a first-time Olympian after just four months on ice.

Coming from the world of inline skating, Jackson qualified in the 500 meters by finishing third behind veterans Brittany Bowe and Heather Bergsma.

Bowe had the fastest time over two heats Friday night. She was quicker in her first run around the big oval, clocking 37.95 seconds. Her second run was 38.18.

Bergsma also was quicker in her first heat at 38.24. Her second trip was 38.42.

Jackson was just the opposite.

The 25-year-old skater from Ocala, Florida, went 39.22 in her first heat. She was even better in her second run, going 39.04.

"I really wasn't expecting any of this, just coming in as a newbie, just trying to do the best I can," she said, smiling. "I still don't even know."

Jackson becomes the third black athlete to make the U.S. speedskating team for the Olympics next month. She joins fellow long-tracker Shani Davis and short-tracker Maame Biney, who is originally from Ghana.

Bowe and Bergsma had already earned spots in Pyeongchang by finishing 1-2 in the 1,000, so doubling up in another event cleared the way for Jackson to join them.

Her previous personal best was 39.51 set Dec. 23 in the high altitude of Salt Lake City.

"A couple weeks ago, I was still in the 40s," Jackson said. "I think I hadn't even broken 40 [seconds] yet, so it's all happened really fast."

Bowe is a former inline skater from Ocala and has been a teammate of Jackson's for several years.

"She's improving dramatically every time she steps on that ice," Bowe said. "She's at a point now where she can make those huge gains, so to see that two races in a row out here when the pressure is the highest is really promising for her and the sprint program for Team USA."

On the men's side, Mitch Whitmore added the 500 to his schedule after making his third Olympic team in the 1,000.

He skated fastest in his first heat at 35.06, but Whitmore had slow reactions in both heats.

"I've got a lot of room for improvement still," he said. "It's more stressful here than at World Cups or other big competitions just because you have to make the team and there's expectations of being a favorite going into this competition."

Jonathan Garcia made the team by finishing second at 35.22 after missing out in the 1,000 earlier in the week.

Kimani Griffin, a former inliner, was third at 35.26 and is expected to make the team depending on other skaters doubling up in events.

Blair Cruikshank, the teenage daughter of five-time Olympic champion Bonnie Blair, finished 15th among 18 skaters in the 500. She had identical times of 42.21 in both heats, which was a personal best.

"I'm pretty excited, and I'm sure she's over there having a ton of fun also," Blair said, referring to her mom, who shook a blue cowbell and yelled for her daughter to "stay down" as Blair sprinted around the big oval. Blair is coached by her father, four-time Olympian Dave Cruikshank.

Blair's goal is to make the 2022 Olympic team.

"This was just experience," she said. "Hopefully, with the next one I can come out here and make the team, but I still have a long ways to go to get there."

Jonathan Garcia overcomes disappointment to make Olympic team

<https://www.jsonline.com/story/sports/olympics/2018/01/05/jonathan-garcia-overcomes-disappointment-make-olympic-team/998750001/>

Jonathan Garcia spent two days beating himself up mentally over not making the U.S. Olympic long-track speedskating team in the 1,000 meters.

It's his favorite race, his best race, the one he focused on going into the Olympic trials at the Pettit National Ice Center. He thought the 1,000 gave him the best chance to win a medal at the Winter Games next month.

And then he finished fourth Wednesday. Only the top three qualified for the Olympic team. Garcia needed to be three-tenths of a second faster.

"I'm still trying to get over the 1,000," he said Friday. "That was a pretty big blow for me. ... It's going to be something that I'm probably going to look back on and be upset over for a long time. But I did everything I could. I flat-out just got beat that day."

Fortunately, he had another day.

On Friday, he punched his ticket to Pyeongchang by finishing second to Waukesha's Mitch Whitmore in the 500 meters in front of a sellout crowd of 1,350.

Whitmore won the race in 35.03 seconds and Garcia's time was 35.12. Both are guaranteed spots on the U.S. team. Kimani Griffin finished third in 35.26, but his spot is tentative and depends on other skaters doubling up in other events, because only eight men can make the team.

Skaters raced two heats in the 500 but only their fastest time counted.

The women are guaranteed three spots in the race in South Korea, and the qualifiers were Brittany Bowe (37.95), Heather Bergsma (38.24) and Erin Jackson (39.04).

Former Milwaukee resident Sugar Todd, who finished 29th in the 500 at the 2014 Sochi Games, was fourth in 39.27 and did not make the team.

Garcia, of Houston, has been focused on the 1,000 in his training and now will have to make some adjustments to prepare for a shorter, faster race. He finished 28th in the 1,000 in Sochi.

"I'll really have to start working on my start," he said. "I really went all-in in the 1,000. I wanted to do the best in that race because that was probably the best (chance) I had of medaling at the Games. But I am thankful to be going back to the Olympics for the second time."

Whitmore, 28, qualified in the 1,000 on Wednesday and went into the 500 as the favorite. He holds the American record (34.19).

He had to overcome a false start in his second heat, and his pair was called back to the line in the first heat because of crowd interference.

"Yeah, I was a little frustrated with the starts today," Whitmore said. "I thought the first race was a really long hold (by the starter) and then the second one, I thought I timed it really well but it turns out

I didn't. And then I was really slow off the line on that second one."

Bowe has bounced back from a bout with walking pneumonia earlier this season. She looked strong in both of her heats, beating rival and close friend Bergsma each time.

"Really, really pleased with that performance," she said. "Really happy with how my opening 100 meters is coming along. Obviously, we still have a little bit of work to do on that top-end speed for the lap but I'm really, really pleased and happy with two solid 500s today."

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Jackson, 25, of Ocala, Fla., was the biggest surprise of the day. An accomplished inline skater, she started speedskating in February, went back to inline racing for the summer and came back to the ice at the end of September.

She was not projected to make the Olympic team but set a personal best in her first race (39.22) and then lowered it an hour later.

"I surprised myself a lot," she said. "I really wasn't expecting any of this, just coming in as a newbie, just trying to do the best I can. ... It's been a crazy experience. A couple weeks ago I was still in the 40s (seconds). I think I hadn't even broken 40 all year, so it's all happened really fast."

Bowe also is from Ocala and has known Jackson for years.

"Never underestimate Erin," she said. "I've known her since she was a little thing, both of us growing up in Ocala, both of us on the same inline skating team. (She's) one of the most talented girls I know and I keep telling people if she gives this thing a shot and stays focused and determined, she's going to be a force to be reckoned with."

Racing resumes at 5 p.m. Saturday with the men's and women's 1,500.

Long-Track Speedskaters Finish Olympic Trials, Aim For Medals

<https://www.wpr.org/long-track-speedskaters-finish-olympic-trials-aim-medals>

After the U.S. Olympic long-track speedskating trials wrapped up Sunday night in Milwaukee, a U.S. coach said he thinks the U.S. men's and women's teams can win medals at the Winter Games next month.

The optimism comes despite U.S. long-track speedskaters being shut out at the 2014 Olympics in Sochi, Russia.

But U.S. speedskating high performance director Guy Thibault said he was impressed with many of the speedskaters during the week of Olympic Trials at the Pettit National Ice Center in Milwaukee.

"I think they kind of learned from what could have happened in Sochi," Thibault said. "So we did a little more preparation — what to avoid, and what to do more, what to do less. I think they're on the right track."

Thibault said multiple qualifiers like Joey Mantia, Shani Davis, Heather Bergsma and Brittany Bowe are particularly impressive. He said the biggest surprise of the Winter Trials was Erin Jackson qualifying in the 500-meter race Friday, becoming the first African-American on the women's long-track speedskating team.

Jackson has only been long-track speedskating for four months after switching from inline skating competitions, according to the Chicago Tribune.

Sunday night, eight women and 24 men skated in the mass-start races. Mantia placed first in the men's race. Bergsma captured the women's contest.

Meanwhile, a long-track speedskater with a Wisconsin tie has made the team. Marquette University engineering student Emery Lehman was added Sunday night to the team pursuit competition after not qualifying for the Olympic Games in two earlier events.

Lehman said the next few weeks will be focused on getting ready for next month's Winter Games.

"Yeah, I gotta e-mail my adviser and withdraw from classes," said Lehman, an Illinois resident. "But other than that, yeah, prepping for training camp here and just going to training like I trained for this meet."

Lehman is still waiting to hear whether he will also skate in the 5,000-meter event. He joins Waukesha native Mitchell Whitmore on the U.S. men's speedskating team. Several other members from other states train at the Pettit National Ice Center.

U.S. Olympic speed skating team finalized after trials

<http://olympics.nbcports.com/2018/01/07/us-olympic-speedskating-team-roster/>

WEST ALLIS, Wis. (AP) — All Joey Mantia needed to do to qualify for the mass start in the Olympics was to finish at the U.S. speed skating trials.

He took it a little easy to begin the race Sunday before adrenaline kicked in.

The fifth-place finish on Sunday clinched Mantia's spot in the mass start at the Winter Games, where the reigning world champion has bigger goals in mind.

"I really wanted to let those guys race it out and then I got a little hungry with a half-lap to go. I thought, 'Maybe I can win this,'" Mantia said.

Brian Hansen took the event with a time of 7:48.24 on Sunday, the final day of the trials.

Mantia and Hansen had already qualified in other events. U.S. Speed Skating added Emery Lehman as a specialist in team pursuit to complete the seven-member men's squad.

Jonathan Garcia — 500m

Kimani Griffin — 500m

Mitchell Whitmore — 500m, 1000m

Shani Davis — 1000m, 1500m

Joey Mantia — 1000m, 1500m, mass start

Brian Hansen — 1500m, mass start

Emery Lehman — team pursuit specialist

Lehman, a 2014 Olympian, will have to interrupt his junior year at Marquette, about a 10-minute drive from the Pettit National Ice Center near Milwaukee.

"I have to email my adviser, withdraw from classes," Lehman said.

Mantia and Hansen finished one-two in the overall rankings to secure the two entries in the mass start, which makes its Olympic debut in PyeongChang.

"I think we can put together a solid plan. I think he's on board for working for me, as the designated winner for the Games, but we've got to see how it plays out and who's feeling the best when we get there," Mantia said. "But I'm very confident having a strong teammate like Hansen."

The mass start is speed skating's version of NASCAR. Foregoing the traditional time-trial format, all entries were on the oval at the same time for the 16-lap, 6400m free-for-all that included four sprint laps.

"You never know what's going to happen in that race," Hansen said.

Asked if the goal was to help Mantia, Hansen added "We've got three weeks. I don't know what exactly the strategy is going to be yet."

With 24 entries on Sunday, the men's race was a little more hectic than the eight-entry women's race in which Heather Bergsma finished second and Mia Manganello third.

That gave each skater, who had already qualified in other events, enough points to finish atop the rankings to clinch the U.S. berths.

Consider the combinations of Mantia and Hansen, and Bergsma and Manganello, as two-person squads at the Games.

“I think that’s the best way that we can get a country medal at the Olympics, is working as a unit,” Manganello said, “and I think with [Bergsma] and I, I think we’ve got a great opportunity to do so.”

Maria Lamb won the women’s race at 9:15.17, but could not pass Bergsma or Manganello in overall points in order to qualify. The women’s roster for the Olympics is complete with six skaters.

Heather Bergsma — 500m, 1000m, 1500m, mass start

Brittany Bowe — 500m, 1000m, 1500m

Erin Jackson — 500m

Jerica Tandiman — 1000m

Mia Manganello — 1500m, mass start

Carlijn Schoutens — 3000m, 5000m

The mass start wrapped up what U.S. Speedskating high performance director Guy Thibault considered a successful trials.

They drew sellout crowds for all six days in the return to Pettit for the first time since 1998.

Once considered the American mecca for the sport, Pettit had been overtaken by the Utah Olympic Oval in recent years as the home for top speedskaters.

“I’ve never seen the Pettit Center so busy,” Thibault said. “That was actually pretty amazing.”

Now it’s on to PyeongChang, where the U.S. hopes to erase the painful memories of getting shutout four years ago in Sochi.

It was the first time that Americans failed to earn a medal in speed skating since 1984.

“As far as selection goes, I think we ended up with the best team,” Thibault said.

Praise pours in for speedskater Erin Jackson

<http://www.gainesville.com/news/20180108/praise-pours-in-for-speedskater-erin-jackson>

The Forest High and UF grad made the Olympic team, joining two fellow Marion County representatives.

Marion County calls itself the Horse Capital of the World. It may need to rebrand — at least until late February.

Marion is the hometown of not one, not two, but three members of the U.S. Olympic speedskating team that will compete next month in South Korea. Over the weekend Erin Jackson, 25, became a surprise addition to the team, joining the veteran Marion duo of Brittany Bowe and Joey Mantia.

Three speedskaters is quite a showing for a land-locked Florida county where the only ice to be found is floating in a glass of sweet tea.

The odd juxtaposition might lead some people to laugh and make allusions to the Jamaican bobsled team. Renee Hildebrand doesn't see the joke.

"It's not a laughing thing when they're medal contenders," said Hildebrand, who has coached all three skaters.

Bowe and Mantia are past Olympians and were expected to make the team. Bowe, 29, will skate in the 500-, 1,000- and 1,500-meter races at Pyeongchang. Mantia, 31, will compete in the 1,000- and 1,500-meter contests, as well as the mass start.

Jackson qualified in the 500-meter race this past weekend during the U.S. speedskating trials in Milwaukee. She finished third to Bowe and Heather Bergsma.

Jackson has only been skating on ice for four months. Like Bowe and Mantia, she came up through the world of inline speedskating in Ocala.

The Star-Banner was unable to reach Jackson on Monday. Hildebrand already was back from Milwaukee and working her day job at a medical facility in Leesburg.

"I'm elated," Hildebrand said during a phone interview.

She said Jackson's showing was a surprise, in one respect, since she's so new to skating on ice. But Hildebrand praised Jackson's intelligence, skill and drive.

"If anybody could do that," she said, it would be Jackson.

They dined together at Panera before the race in Milwaukee. Jackson was just hoping to make Top 10.

Learn more

Click on this story at ocala.com for links to source material and past coverage.

About Erin Jackson

Birthplace: Ocala

High school: Forest

College: University of Florida

Team/Club: Ocala Speed

Coach: Renee Hildebrand

Inline skating: 10 medals at world championships; 2015 Pan American Games silver medal in the 500.

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/ErinJackson12>

Twitter: @ErinJackson480

Instagram: @speedyj

Source: www.teamusa.org; <https://sites.google.com/site/jacksonerin5032/home>

Jackson is a Forest High School graduate (Class of 2011) who went on to the University of Florida. She graduated cum laude with a bachelor's degree from the Materials Science & Engineering program. According to her official biography, she conducted research in the fracture mechanics of dental ceramics in conjunction with the UF Center for Dental Biomaterials.

"She's quite an individual," Hildebrand said.

She started inline speedskating in January 2003 and has enjoyed great success, winning medals at the World Championships and Pan American Championships.

Like Mantia and Bowe before her, Jackson competes on the Ocala Speed team, which works out of the Skate-a-way South rink in Ocala. The place is easy to miss, tucked away behind the Save-a-lot discount grocery store just south of the 2000 block of East Silver Springs Boulevard. But there's quite a show going on inside.

Hildebrand regularly brings in international skaters to up the level of training and competition. In September, Ocala Speed had several representatives on the U.S. team that participated in the World Roller Games in Nanjing, China.

Inline skating has become a feeder for the nation's ice speedskating program, and Ocala Speed certainly is doing its part.

The National Speed Skating Circuit was among the many people and organizations reaching out on Monday to share good wishes.

"Join us in congratulating Brittany Bowe, Joey Mantia and Erin Jackson for qualifying to represent Team USA in the 2018 winter Olympic Games. These 3 have done such an amazing job of representing the inline speed community," the organization wrote on Facebook.

Many of Jackson's friends posted on social media. One of her former Forest teachers gave a shout-out on Facebook.

Janie Roberts Bray of Citra has known Jackson since she was a toddler. Bray coached her when she was a young girl participating in pageants.

Jackson's mother died when Erin was a teenager.

"I know how proud her mom would be" today, Bray said.

Jackson's success comes as no surprise to Bray. "She's always been real dedicated. She's just a cool kid...I still see her as little Erin."

Jackson also is a member of Team USA Roller Derby.

Utah doctors playing key role for Team USA at 2018 Olympics

<https://www.ksl.com/index.php?sid=46232963&nid=1268&title=utah-doctors-playing-vital-role-for-team-usa-at-2018-olympics>

Though he's a native Utahn, Dr. Christopher Gee was a few thousand miles away from the excitement in 2002 when the Olympics came to Salt Lake City. He remembers watching in awe as the world's elite skiers, lugers and hockey players poured into the familiar Rice-Eccles Stadium for the Opening Ceremonies.

"I love the Olympics, and it was kind of weird to be watching from afar when it was all happening in my home state," said Gee, a sports medicine physician with University of Utah Health.

To this day, the sports enthusiast has never had the opportunity to attend an Olympic event. Soon, that's going to change in a big way when the Pyeongchang, South Korea Games get underway.

"When I found out I was going with the speedskating team, I couldn't believe I was going to be there and be part of the Olympics. You get that patriotic feeling. You get a little glimpse of what these athletes feel when they go over there and represent their country."

Gee won't just have a front-row seat to the Games, set for Feb. 9-25, he'll be an important member of the American delegation when he serves as a Team USA physician. Gee will spend the first two weeks of the Games with the speedskaters, a group he's become a fan of while providing care at the Utah Olympic Oval, the speedskaters' home base.

"When I found out I was going with the speedskating team, I couldn't believe I was going to be there and be part of the Olympics," Gee said. "You get that patriotic feeling. You get a little glimpse of what these athletes feel when they go over there and represent their country."

As many of us remember from Apolo Ohno's heroics in the Salt Lake City Games, short-track speedskating in particular can be a rough-and-tumble sport that involves frequent full-speed collisions into walls and fellow skaters. Gee will be on hand to treat everything from bumps and bruises to lacerations and concussions and whatever other injuries arise as Team USA attempts to bring home the gold.

When speedskating competition wraps up, he'll spend the rest of the Games providing medical care to anyone in the U.S. contingency who needs it, including the athletes, coaches and die-hard fans who made the trip.

The unique opportunity to provide care to America's elite athletes before, during and after some of the biggest moments of their lives arose because University of Utah Health is a member of the U.S. Olympic Committee's National Medical Network, which provides America's Olympic and Paralympic athletes with top-tier medical care.

As one of three members of the network, U of U Health is entrusted to provide orthopedics, primary care, dentistry, psychiatry, ophthalmology and neurosurgery to our country's top athletes whether they're the favorite to win gold or are simply thrilled to walk behind the American flag during the opening and closing ceremonies.

Gee heads to South Korea Jan. 30 to begin his work with the speedskaters as they continue to train and become familiar with the South Korean ice in preparation for the Games. He'll be joined by fellow U of U physician Dr. Ted Paisley, who will also serve as a Team USA doctor.

"I think it's a really amazing opportunity as a university to be involved with the USOC at this level, to be able to not only represent the university but to represent our country and help our athletes perform their best," Gee said. "In a small way, we're doing our part for the games."

Medal projection: Germany tops PyeongChang Olympic standings

<http://olympics.nbcsports.com/2018/01/10/pyeongchang-olympics-medal-predictions/>

TOKYO (AP) — It's still unclear how many Russian athletes will compete in the PyeongChang Olympics, but a few things seem certain.

Athletes from winter powers like Germany and Norway could pick up unexpected medals with some top Russians absent because of a massive doping scheme four years ago at the Sochi Games.

One medal forecast for Pyeongchang, compiled by Gracenote Sports, which refers to itself as a "sports and entertainment provider," shows the impact if Russian athletes are missing.

Gracenote released its medal-table projection Wednesday, this time removing all Russians from the calculation.

The U.S.-based company said it would release a final prediction just before the Olympics open Feb. 9, this time including Russians who are known to be eligible and who will compete under the name "Olympic Athlete from Russia," or OAR.

Their participation, of course, would cut into the medal haul of other strong nations.

The Russian Olympic Committee said in December that "more than 200" athletes will meet the qualifying criteria.

However, the final decision, barring appeals to the based-Swiss Court of Arbitration for Sport, will be in the hands of an IOC commission — the Fournayron Commission.

Germany and Norway are the big winners without Russia.

Gracenote forecasts Germany would win five extra medals, followed by Norway with four.

Canada, France and Japan would pick up two extra medals. Finland, Britain, Italy and the Netherlands would get one each.

Germany's extra haul would push its medal-leading total to 40 — 14 gold, 12 silver and 14 bronze. Norway is next with 37 overall, but it would take 14 gold to tie Germany in that department.

Canada is predicted to take third place with 33 overall, followed by the United States (29) and France (24).

— If Germany wins 40 medals, it would be the country's most successful total since 2002 in Salt Lake City. Biathlon will net Germany's largest haul with 10 medals.

— These could be record-setting games for Norway, which has never won more than 29 overall. Norway is forecast to win a whopping 19 medals in cross-country skiing alone.

— Canada and the United States are forecast to win medals in 10 of the 15 sports at the Winter Games: Alpine skiing, biathlon, bobsled, cross-country skiing, curling, figure skating, freestyle skiing, ice hockey, luge, Nordic combined, short-track speed skating, skeleton, ski jumping, snowboarding, speedskating.

— France also is on a record-setting pace, predicted to win 24 medals — nine over its record total in Sochi.

To calculate its predictions, Gracenote weighs results in recent world championships and other world-class events, giving more weight to the most recent.

At the Rio Olympics, Gracenote compiled a top-five list in every discipline.

It said 80 percent of the eventual medalists came from these lists. It is expecting similar results for PyeongChang.

Kearns speedskater heading to compete in Winter Olympics

<https://www.ksl.com/index.php?sid=46235789&nid=148&title=kearns-speedskater-heading-to-compete-in-winter-olympics>

KEARNS — Jerica Tandiman's dream is finally coming true.

After 16 years of skating lessons and grueling training, the 23-year-old can officially call herself an Olympian.

Tandiman is heading to Pyeongchang in February to compete on Team USA for a medal in long-track speedskating in the 2018 Winter Olympics. Tandiman finished fourth in the 1,000 meters at the U.S. speedskating trials last week.

"When I found out they were going to name me to the team, I was fighting back tears," she said after a training session at the Utah Olympic Oval in Kearns earlier this week.

And while it'll be Tandiman's first time as an athlete, it won't be her first Olympics.

Tandiman, a Kearns native, grew up near the Utah Olympic Oval where she remembers her parents taking her to watch the 2002 Winter Olympics held in and around Salt Lake City.

"The whole theme of 'Light the Fire Within' during the Olympics — I think it did light the fire within a lot of people," Tandiman said. "That Olympic spirit, it's like contagious. Once you get a taste of it, you want more."

Tandiman was 7 years old when skating became her life.

"I had (the) motivation to skate and train all day, but homework? Oh man," she said.

The Olympian earned good grades at Kearns High School — which was important to her parents — where she would attend classes in between morning and afternoon skating sessions.

Matt Kooreman, a U.S. speedskating coach, described Tandiman as a mellow, laid-back, dedicated kid who went about her business and developed into world-class skater. He considers her a valuable member of the team, he said.

That Olympic spirit, it's like contagious. Once you get a taste of it, you want more.

—Jerica Tandiman

"It's been super special for me to watch Jerica because I coached her when she was 8 years old," Kooreman said.

For Tandiman, the whole experience has been life-changing.

"I've had so many experiences that I wouldn't have had otherwise if it wasn't for the Olympics," she said.

The 2018 Winter Olympics will begin Feb. 9 and run through Feb. 25.

Kimani Griffin still coming to terms with the "Olympian" title

http://www.journalnow.com/sports/community_sports/kimani-griffin-still-coming-to-terms-with-the-olympian-title/article_690f28df-c970-546e-86db-11e98498fe58.html

The title of "Olympian" still doesn't seem certain to Kimani Griffin.

The Winston-Salem native performed well over the weekend at the U.S. speedskating trials in Milwaukee, Wis., finishing third in the men's 500-meter race and earning a spot on the American eight-man team for the 2018 Olympics.

On Thursday, Griffin had already returned back to his home in Salt Lake City and prepared for an afternoon training session. But his schedule will pick up soon.

He'll return to Milwaukee on Sunday for a two-week pre-Olympic training camp. The team will travel to Pyeongchang, South Korea for the Winter Games after that, with Griffin participating in the 500-meter on Feb. 18.

"I think when things start ramping back up and flights start happening and travel and team processing, it will start to be more surreal," Griffin said. "But yeah, I was beyond stoked at how I raced last week. It was probably the most fun I've ever had racing.

"Awesome crowd, sold out all week. I was ecstatic just to be a part of it and be healthy and able to do what I love doing."

Griffin — who attended Summit School, Reynolds High School and the School of the Arts while living in Winston-Salem — thought the Olympic achievement was created by well-timed struggle. In October, Griffin failed to make the roster for the Fall U.S. Long Track World Cup Qualifiers. With only two spots on the U.S. roster for 500-meter racers, he finished third.

Being part of that team would have forced him to travel. Griffin said that when he travels frequently while skating, he typically struggles to perform as well as he can.

Griffin said he used his time to study his technique, recover and train for the Olympic trials. He wouldn't let himself miss that chance.

By the time December started, Griffin felt strong when he competed during the World Cup's tour to Salt Lake City from Dec. 8-10.

"I was able to go back to the drawing board and the blueprints to figure out some things I could do to not miss the team in January," Griffin said. "So I stayed home and trained and I was able to compete at the World Cup here in Salt Lake in the 500, and qualified as the third country spot for the Olympics which ultimately was the spot I qualified for at Olympic trials.

"I'm a big believer in things always happening for a reason, whether I know why or why not at the time."

Before Griffin found his love for skating, he found a love for music. Playing guitar growing up, he later shifted his career goals to speed skating and moved across country to train.

Griffin doesn't see many similarities between the two activities, but he recognizes that his old music career helped build the dedication he has now. That dedication will have him surrounded by the world's best athletes next month.

"As much as I used to lock myself in a practice room and dedicate myself to different repertoires of music and trying to find a composer's history and any little thing that I could do to make the piece of music more relatable to me relates to skating as well," Griffin said. "Every day, I come to the rink, and I'm putting my craft under a microscope.

"I go home. I watch video. From sleep regiment to supplements to my diet to recovery with my physio, every little thing I can do to be better at skating, I think it's the same. There's a rhythm to skating like there is to music, but I think trying to do anything at life at a high level comes down to how much of your sanity you are willing to sacrifice."

Lehman's road to Pyeongchang Olympics full of adversity

<https://marquettewire.org/3984391/sports/lehmans-road-to-pyeongchang-olympics-full-of-adversity/>

Emery Lehman never thought his road to Pyeongchang, South Korea, for the 2018 Winter Olympics would be easy.

Lehman, a junior in the College of Engineering and a long track speedskater, will pack his bags and head to the Winter Olympics in less than one month to represent Marquette and Team USA after four years of grueling civil engineering classes and a bout with mononucleosis.

"It's definitely nice to know that I'm going back (to the Olympics), but at the same time, the hard work kind of starts now," Lehman said after his final race of the Olympic Trials at the Pettit National Ice Center in Milwaukee.

It's the second Olympic appearance for Lehman, who will race as a specialist in the team pursuit event, which entails three skaters racing as a team. The last Marquette athlete to make it to the Winter games was former student Brian Hansen in 2014, who also qualified in long track speedskating. Hansen will be joining Lehman in Pyeongchang as he qualified in the 1,500 meter race.

The stress level was high all week for Lehman. He did not find out he made the team until after the final race on the last day of the Olympic Trials. It proved that his first appearance at the 2014 Olympics in Sochi was no fluke.

"It's definitely better the second time around than the first time around," Lehman said. "(I was) kind of on pins and needles because you never really know until the weekend is over, especially with how racing goes, but I knew that I had to come out and race really well, and leave it up to U.S. Speedskating to make the decision."

Other competitors had the same sense of pressure in the trials.

"There was more pressure for the Olympic Trials rather than the Olympics themselves," fellow speedskater Joey Mantia of Ocala, Florida, said. "The first race going in, nerves are just at an all-time high ... It's a high-stress situation."

Before the team pursuit event, Lehman won his first event, the 5,000-meter race, with a time of 6 minutes and 27.9 seconds, a personal best. He also competed in the 1,000-meter race, where he missed out on an Olympic spot by just two-tenths of a second, less than a blink of an eye.

Even the win in the 5K race was bittersweet. Although Lehman emerged victorious, he holds the third reserve spot in world rankings since Team USA did not qualify anyone in the World Cup cycle. He'll have to wait to see if other countries decline spots and see whether Russian skaters can compete despite a state-sponsored doping program. If they are found ineligible or other skaters are unable to race, Lehman will get an opportunity in the 5,000-meter event as well.

"That is very common," Chris Needham, chairman of the U.S. Speedskating long track committee said. "A lot of countries have very high standards for what their athletes need to do to compete at the Olympics and if you haven't met that, it doesn't matter if you are on the list or not, you don't get that spot."

Competing at the Trials was the end of a long journey back from a battle with mononucleosis his sophomore year.

“Mono took a lot out of me and put things on hold for quite a while,” Lehman said. “It was a lot of ups and downs with training because it was tough to know when my body was feeling good and when it wasn’t. It was pretty tough just to get through each training day.”

While Lehman was battling mono, he also was in the process of transitioning to a new coach. His previous coach, Jeff Klaiber was with Lehman from the age of 14 until the summer entering his sophomore year of college, seven and a half seasons. Klaiber was with Lehman while he competed at the Sochi games, but Lehman realized that it was time to move on.

“I just outgrew that stage and was ready for a new coach,” Lehman said. “My coach that I have now, Eric Cepuran, we’ve been on the same page, and I think he really respects me a little more. I have a little bit more of a freedom when it comes to training, workouts that I want to do and then I think there’s a lot better of a dynamic than these two, which is definitely helpful.”

After a coaching change, mono and the Trials, returning to Marquette has been put on hold because of the Olympics. Lehman will continue to live in Milwaukee and train at the Pettit Center with Hansen and Mantia, his other team pursuit members.

If there’s ever a reason for not returning to class, making the Olympics is it. “Now I have to email Ms. Lagerman, (my academic advisor), and let her know,” Lehman said.

There have been ups and downs on the road to Pyeongchang, but now Lehman will get the opportunity he’s been waiting for: a shot at an Olympic medal.

“With all of the sacrifices and things that I’ve had to overcome these last few years, I’m not saying I had the hardest road to make it back to the Olympics, but it was tough,” Lehman said. “I’m just so thankful I made it back.”

How a Florida town with no ice rink produced three Olympic speedskaters

<https://sports.yahoo.com/florida-town-no-ice-rink-produced-three-olympic-speedskaters-221029796.html>

OCALA, Fla. – Here in this old horse town, down the road from Darrell’s Dog Gone Good Diner, in the lot behind the Save A Lot food stores, through the flimsy wooden door, past the snack bar and Ms. Pac Man arcade game, there stands a grandmother with a booming voice and graying, stringy hair.

This woman holds the key to Winter Olympics glory.

Next month, Renee Hildebrand will send three athletes to the Games in South Korea: Joey Mantia, Brittany Bowe and Erin Jackson. They are all speedskaters, all from here, a town with no ice rink.

Jackson has trained on ice for only a total of four months of her life. She is now the first African-American woman ever to make the U.S. long-track team.

“I was more than surprised,” she says of her qualification. “It didn’t make any sense. I didn’t understand it.”

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Nobody really understands it. At Olympics trials, someone came up to Hildebrand and effused: “You’re the best developmental ice coach in the country!” Hildebrand said thanks but added, “I don’t coach ice.”

Meet the woman who built a winter mecca out of a roller rink behind a Save A Lot in Central Florida. Meet the Oracle of Ocala.

Hildebrand grew up in Lakeland, about 45 minutes south of here, and she always wanted to be a world champion roller skater. She got her start on the four-wheel, two-by-two skates and studied sports medicine so she could coach as well. In the early ’90s, she moved to Ocala for a job as a physical therapist, and at around that time, inline skates came out. It was as if the entire roller world hit a reset button. The tiers of the sport were slashed to the ground and someone like Hildebrand could leap to the top of the game if she could master inlines.

“It put me on a level playing field,” she says. “We all had to coach inlines.”

Since inlines mirrored speedskating on ice, she studied a book by Olympic gold medalist Dianne Holum. She absorbed the importance of technique and body positioning, and she became proficient in tutoring both.

The goal was always to win Olympics gold in inline. She still has a roller skating bumper sticker from 1980 that says, “Next stop, the Olympics.” But there was a problem: The sport never made it into the Games.

So although she got very good at coaching inline and even roller derby, the ultimate dream was not available. Unless ...

In 2002, Derek Parra, a former inline skater who spent time in Tampa, won gold in speedskating at the Salt Lake Games. Others followed, including Chad Hedrick, who won gold four years later.

The kids Renee trained, Mantia and Bowe, made the switch as teens. Joey moved from Florida to Colorado and then Utah to train, and within three years he was beating teammate Shani Davis and world champion Denis Yuskov. It was almost the exact same trajectory for Bowe, who had played college hoops at Florida Atlantic before moving to Salt Lake. Less than four years after switching to ice, they were Olympians.

But the most amazing story was yet to come.

And it began in a Waffle House.

Erin Jackson's mom, Rita, loved the Southern staple, and she would always order the Texas Toast. When you spend that much time at Waffle House, sometimes you get to know the regulars. One of the regulars was a local inline coach known as "Nasty Nay."

Hildebrand assumed the name for her demeanor but because every derby skater has a handle. In real life she loved coaching and when inline skating invariably came up in conversation, Erin's mom mentioned her 10-year-old daughter. Hildebrand started working with the little girl, and after some time she had a Derby name of her own: "Miss Jax'em."

There wasn't much in Erin's background that screamed "elite athlete." Her dad, Tracy, built fire trucks. Rita was a pharmacy tech. Even Erin herself was more interested in schoolwork; she would go to the University of Florida and major in materials engineering.

From Carnegie Hall To PyeongChang, Kimani Griffin Heads To First Olympic Games

<https://www.teamusa.org/US-Speedskating/News/Featured-News/2018/January/25/From-Carnegie-Hall-To-PyeongChang-Kimani-Griffin-Heads-To-First-Olympic-Games>

In just a few weeks, speedskater Kimani Griffin, 27, will join a cast of Olympic first-timers in Pyeongchang. But he's no stranger to the bright lights and big stage — or to public broadcasting.

At age 17, the Winston-Salem, N.C., native was featured on the PBS program, *From the Top*, when he performed classical guitar at Carnegie Hall. He stepped away from playing music professionally after accepting a full scholarship to college in Georgia. But setting aside his other passion — in-line skating — wasn't as easy.

"I really enjoyed my time (at Columbus State University), but I really missed skating," Griffin says. "I really missed the world of working out and that competitive nature." He thought, "Maybe I'll move to Salt Lake and see if I can go down this path."

Eight years after taking that leap, he's back in his element. Earlier this month, Griffin's third-place finish in the 500-meter race landed him a spot on the eight-man U.S. speedskating team.

From his Brookfield, Wisc., training ground, Kimani Griffin spoke with NPR's Michelle Martin about his journey back to the joy of competitive performance — and how Gucci Mane fits into his routine.

On whether qualifying for the Olympics or his Carnegie Hall debut was more nerve-wracking I think they're about the same. I actually wasn't too nervous or felt under pressure for either one of those experiences. I think in both experiences I was just having fun kind of in my element doing what I do.

On when he shifted his priorities from music to speedskating
Spring and summer of 2008 was kind of a big turning point in my life. I was, at that time, at the top of my game in in-line skating. And with guitar, I had just done an NPR show in Connecticut on the radio; I had just done the Carnegie Hall concert. So I was kind of in a tough spot as far as what I wanted to do in my life, what direction and path I wanted to take. I ended up getting a full-ride (scholarship) to go to school in Georgia, Columbus State University. I really enjoyed my time there, but I really missed skating, I really missed the world of working out and that competitive nature.

I was just kind of like a 19-year-old spur-of-the-moment — maybe I'll move to Salt Lake and see if I can go down this path. Music and sports have been my two outlets in life so luckily when I left school I had another passion to fall back on. I kind of took a risk and — eight years later here I am.

On the joy of speedskating
I guess for the 500 (meters), you have that 34, 35-seconds of — just time essentially stops. You're just in the moment, you can't hear anything, I mean even your coach is screaming at you on the backstretch but you can't even hear him most of the time — at least for me. And I'm just so focused in every little push, every little body angle, every movement that I'm doing to propel myself forward. And then when I cross the line, all of the sudden I hear people screaming and I look at the clock and, hopefully it's a time that I want to see.

To listen to the full interview, [click here](#).

Shut Out in 2014, U.S. Speedskaters Modify Their Suits, Their Training and Their Expectations

<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/22/sports/olympics/speedskating-pyeongchang-games.html?rref=collection%2Fsectioncollection%2Fsports>

The speedskaters summoned to Santa Rosa, Calif., last spring for the United States Olympic team's annual strength and conditioning camp found a curious item on their schedules: a tai chi lesson.

Unsure of how the skaters would react, Shane Domer, the team's sports science director, watched the first session with some apprehension.

"We were like, 'O.K., this could go south,' " Domer said with a laugh. "Our guys could make fun, or not buy in."

But the skaters took to it, and soon Mark Cheng, the tai chi instructor, became a regular presence around the team. When the group departs later this month for Pyeongchang, South Korea, for the start of the 2018 Games, Cheng will be part of the official traveling party.

U.S. Speedskating has embraced this and other outside-the-box ideas in a bid to return to glory after a disastrous showing at the 2014 Olympics in Sochi, Russia. Perhaps just as notable has been the fact that many of these new ideas, including the tai chi sessions, have come directly from the apparel giant Under Armour, whose speedskating suit famously became a scapegoat for the American team's shortcomings four years ago.

Rather than receding after that public relations catastrophe, Under Armour became determined to take a more hands-on approach in the team's development. The company accounts for about 20 percent of the organization's \$1.2 million in sponsorship revenue — roughly on par with the federation's other top sponsor, Toyota — but in this cycle Under Armour is providing resources and expertise in addition to money.

"Adversity is the best teacher," Kevin Haley, Under Armour's executive vice president for strategy, said about the company's experience in 2014. "It forced all of us to realize that we actually needed to do more. We needed to expand our relationship."

The hubbub over the suits began midway through the 2014 Games. The American speedskaters were scuffling and would ultimately fail to win a single medal. Soon questions arose about, and fingers were pointed at, Under Armour's so-called Mach 39 suit, which had been developed with the help of Lockheed Martin and released with much fanfare. Some members of the American team came to believe that a set of vents on the back of the suit was letting in air — creating drag that was slowing them down.

Ted Morris, the executive director of U.S. Speedskating, said that a coach from another country planted the idea in one of the American skaters' heads, and from there it infected the team like a virus. The issue exploded publicly when The Wall Street Journal published an article in which members of the team anonymously cast doubt on the suit's technology.

Under Armour to this day has stood by the science of the suit, and U.S. Speedskating, in a post-Olympics review, determined that the suits were not the problem. Kevin Plank, Under Armour's chief executive, at the time called the controversy "a witch hunt," though he stopped short of ever criticizing the athletes.

Before the Sochi Games ended, though, Under Armour and U.S. Speedskating renewed their contract through the 2022 Olympics. Then they sat down to reimagine their working relationship. The stakes are high for Under Armour, which stumbled through a dismal 2017, reporting losses for two straight quarters and seeing its share price fall 45 percent.

“We basically did what I would call a performance audit,” said Paul Winsper, the vice president for athlete performance, who previously worked for Nike and multiple professional soccer teams. “We looked at their staffing. We looked at their technology. We looked at how we can help with training support, how we can help educate the athletes.”

Tai chi was just one part of the equation. Under Armour hired Jens Voigt, a German cyclist who competed in the Tour de France 17 times, to lead brutal bicycle workouts at the speedskaters’ conditioning camps in 2016 and 2017. It brought in Pete Naschak, a former Navy Seal, to lead team-building activities. The company supplied chefs and nutritionists to modify the athletes’ diets, and sleep specialists to tailor their nighttime rituals.

It has been a holistic relationship, Winsper said, “not just dropping products off.” Under Armour will have six people with the speedskating team in Pyeongchang, including two garment alteration specialists and Cheng, whose official title will be “mindfulness and recovery specialist.”

And then, of course, there is the matter of the team’s new suits. Clay Dean, Under Armour’s chief innovation officer, said the design team tested 100 different fabrics in more than 250 blends, spending at least 100 hours in wind tunnel tests with the help of the bicycle manufacturer Specialized.

The boldest feature of the suit, Dean said, was the use of an asymmetrical design, with seaming that runs diagonally along the body instead of evenly across, meant to minimize tension in the suit when the skaters are navigating turns in crouched positions.

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PRIVACY POLICY OPT OUT OR CONTACT US ANYTIME

When U.S. Speedskating conducted its own intensive review after the 2014 Olympics, a picture emerged of an organization resting on its laurels. American speedskaters won 31 medals combined at the 2002, 2006 and 2010 Games before being shut out in Sochi.

To start, the review determined that the degree of disappointment experienced in Sochi was a matter of perspective. The racers were simply not as good as they thought and said they were.

Morris said that going into 2014, it had become the expectation that the team was good for another 10 medals.

“When we finished this review, one of our main conclusions was that our expectations were unrealistic,” he added. “When you really look at the data and the results and where we were, we bought into our own hype.”

Morris said the report also faulted the team's strategy of using last-minute "game-changers," an idea favored by Finn Halvorsen, the former high-performance director, who was let go shortly after the 2014 Games. The Mach 39 suits were given to the skaters one month before Sochi, as was a new skate polish.

"His philosophy was to introduce these as late as possible in the process because then they'd go to the line feeling like they had a jetpack on their back," Morris said. "In hindsight, that was the wrong decision."

This Olympic cycle, the team is striving for comfort and continuity. The current suits were introduced to the skaters last February, specifically tailored to each athlete with the help of body-scanning technology.

"We've had ups and downs with the suits since Sochi, and I think Under Armour has done a pretty good job going all in," said Mitch Whitmore, who specializes in the 500 meters. "We've tested these personally instead of just them testing them."

Before the Sochi Games, the team went through a punishing travel schedule that culminated with an outdoor training camp in Collalbo, Italy. It was an odd choice — many of skaters had never trained outdoors before, and the Sochi races were indoors — and it looked even worse after the camp was marred by inclement weather.

This year, the skaters will gather in Milwaukee until departing for South Korea, recreating the ice conditions they expect to find at the Games. They also are sleeping in and training in the evenings, to align themselves with the unusual nighttime competition schedule.

These were significant, positive changes, Morris said. But he thought better of making any bold predictions.

"I think it got us in trouble in '14," Morris said, "and I don't want to go down that road again."

Brittany Bowe's back, bruised but unbowed and bent for speedskating gold

<http://www.chicagotribune.com/sports/international/ct-brittany-bowe-speedskating-olympics-20180126-story.html>

Bump into a skating teammate on the ice, and besides some black and blue bruises, chances are it ends up being a bunch of laughs, too.

Not for Brittany Bowe.

One such clash turned her world class career upside down at the height of her powers — a personal nightmare from which she is emerging only just in time for the Olympics.

At first, the July 2016 collision in Kearns, Utah, left her dazed and with a sore head, which was diagnosed as a concussion. Still, expectations were that a few weeks would take care of it.

"A few weeks turned into a few months, turned into a year," Bowe said. And then some.

At 28, she was the double world sprint champion and had won 10 gold medals in the previous World Cup season. The way she hugged the inner curves of the oval, her sheer speed — she was simply among the very best in the world.

"Things had been going awesome," she said.

Then she was flat on the ice, barely knowing what had happened after she was blindsided into the crash. She was able to get up quickly and gingerly skate around a bit, unawares that, in a blink of a moment, she had just hit a fundamental point in her life. Nothing would be the same in far too long a time.

Super competitive, she wanted to be back as quickly as possible and, somehow took a bronze in the 1,000 meters when she came to the historic home of Dutch skating in Heerenveen for the World Cup that December. It was the equivalent of a mirage — a sudden dash of hope belying disastrous circumstances.

One year later, she still cannot get over it.

"I came out here to a World Cup and lost out on a gold medal by just a couple of tenths of a second, and then two weeks later, saying I can't skate anymore," she said.

And like so many Olympians can attest, at the height of their career, competing is the be-all end-all of their life. "If I am not skating, then what am I doing," was her existential question.

She would go back home to Ocala, Florida, to put the pieces together again, but it didn't work out at first.

"With concussions, it is kind of an invisible injury," she said, and it could leave even teammates or friends oblivious to her real problems. It sometimes left her exasperated.

"There'd be times where people, I wouldn't see them for a while — 'you look great. You look so healthy, you look great' — and inside, I'm dying inside, because I know my head is not on my shoulders where it normally sits," Bowe said.

At that point, it was not so much returning as a sports star but more recovering as a normal human being that was her prime concern.

She had "crazy symptoms."

"My equilibrium was kind of off, I would have dizzy spells, I would have fainting episodes. And with those negative episodes came panic, came anxiety, things that I had never struggled with mentally," she said.

Fortunately for Bowe, time did its essential work — ever so slowly.

As spring beckoned, she went to the U.S. Olympic training center in Colorado Springs, ready to start all over again, from scratch. The change was daunting, from "skating at a high level on the World Cup circuit to being on a recumbent bike being able to bike for five minutes at a time."

Yet, she pulled through. Over the summer, she returned to the Salt Lake City skating center for training among her teammates, and it made all the difference. She was back on the World Cup circuit in Heerenveen in November, winning races in the 500 and 1,000, even if only in the second-tier B division.

And she capped her recovery at the U.S. national trials, where she qualified for the 500, 1,000 and 1,500 meters in South Korea, again the star on the Olympic women's team together with Heather Bergsma.

Suddenly, she has that tunnel vision and narrow focus again, the mark of a champion.

"Ultimately this year, the only thing that matters is the Olympic Games," she said. "I mean, we get one chance every four years to prove ourselves."

What preceded it though, may be life-changing.

"I've learned some things about myself that I am going to take with me on the ice and in the future of my life," she said.

From inline to ice: How a speed skating star got her Olympic chance

<http://www.wfaa.com/sports/olympics/road-to-south-korea/from-inline-to-ice-how-a-speed-skating-star-got-her-olympic-chance/511230845>

If there's one thing Heather Bergsma enjoys, it's speed.

And that's actually how the former inline skater became an Olympian.

"With inline you keep hearing, oh it's going to be in the next summer games, the next summer games so I was really looking forward to that," Bergsma recalled. "Finally, I lost hope and I think my only chances are to switch over to ice."

But switching sports didn't slow her down.

"The less you try, I know it sounds crazy, the faster you'll go," Bergsma explained.

Since Sochi she's switched coaches, got a new training program and is basically doing "everything differently." And the results have been clear.

In 2017, the two-time Olympian won two golds at the World Championship, giving her confidence for the upcoming games in South Korea.

Heather Bergsma skates during training for her third Olympics.

The other big change in her life was getting married to Dutch speed skating champion Jorrit Bergsma.

"He always gives me confidence going in before my races, so that's nice," she said.

She might not get to see her husband a lot in PyeongChang because she'll be representing Team USA in four separate events. And competing in her third Olympics means a lot to her.

Heather Bergsma, a member of the U.S. Speed Skating Team, will be competing in her third Olympics.

"Just being role models, for younger girls that they can also pick a sport and achieve it."

As for those youngsters looking to be Olympians one day, she says to focus on working hard and having fun, but mostly have fun.

And what's Bergsma's good luck ritual before racing? Putting on chap stick.

How Under Armour rebuilt U.S. Speed Skating's training program for the 2018 Winter Olympics

<https://www.mensfitness.com/life/gearandtech/how-under-armour-rebuilt-us-speed-skatings-training-program-2018-winter-olympics>

I TALKED TO Under Armour for nearly two hours for this story. Not once did I hear more than two words about the speed skating “skin suits” the U.S. speed skating team will wear next month at the 2018 Winter Olympics in PyeongChang, South Korea.

Yes, the Under Armour that makes its money by selling clothing didn't talk to me about the clothing.

And, yes, Under Armour is supplying the U.S. suits again, just as in the 2014 Sochi Olympics—where, rather famously, the athletes raced in unfamiliar suits, and some heat came back to Under Armour.

But after multiple conversations with Under Armour and with Team USA, it's clear that the Baltimore-based giant went far beyond supplying clothing for the 2018 Olympic Games. Under Armour has also devoted 56 employees—and thousands of hours in research, development, training, nutrition advice, sleep, meditation, and movement science—to guarantee this year's American speed skating squad is as prepared as humanly possible. (Also read our primer on the U.S. speed skating team's interval workout and "pre-hab" workout routine.)

For one thing, Under Armour signed up for an eight-year commitment to the team. That affords the company a unique opportunity to coach and study elite athletes for its own research, which in turn improves more mainstream jocks' long-term sports science knowledge that, we presume, Under Armour will be able to monetize in the future.

Another reason: patriotism. Without well-trained athletes ready to tackle the grueling 14 speed skating events ranging from 500 to 10,000 meters, fancy Under Armour clothing bearing the stars and stripes won't win medals.

As the company found, there was more behind the speed skating team's disappointing turnout in Sochi than uncomfortable suits. And because Under Armour was prepared to re-invest in the suits, the company was prepared to invest in every other aspect of the team's preparation.

Take, for instance, the simple matter of sleep.

SLEEP

At Sochi, a lot of the premier events were at night. (That will also be the case at PyeongChang.) But leading up to Sochi, the team didn't train their bodies and adjust their clocks to that biological schedule. That was a formula for failure, says Shane Domer, the sports science director for U.S. Speed Skating.

“When you compete really late at night, and that's totally foreign to your body, your diet, and your sleep schedule, it doesn't work whether you're a pro or an amateur athlete,” he says. This year, the team is already eating breakfast at a leisurely 11 a.m., lunch around 4 or 5 p.m., working out from about 7–10 p.m., and not getting to bed until about 1 a.m.—because that's how they'll compete at the games.

“At Sochi we lived and learned,” says Joey Mantia, a world champion long-track speed skater. Mantia admits that the new PyeongChang schedule was an adjustment, but then again: “That’s why we’re doing it, so it will become normal.” The team will even bring blackout blinds, humidifiers, and other special gear to South Korea to be sure they can get the rest they need for proper recovery.

RECOVERY

Speaking of which, another initiative has been to focus on injury prevention and muscle imbalances—which, again, got little attention leading toward Sochi.

“The typical way you approach training pros is to crush the body at certain times, then let them recover,” says Paul Winsper, Under Armour’s vice president of athlete performance. But failing to analyze how athletes respond to workloads is the best way to get them injured, says Winsper, who’s worked with stars like David Beckham and Premier League soccer squads.

Instead, working with Domer, the speed skating team has focused on heart rate variability (a key metric of cardiovascular recovery) and a tool called Omegawave, which measures the central nervous system’s response to stress. By sending a few electrical impulses through the body, Omegawave quantifies rest, stress, mood, and response to nutrition, as well as muscular and mental preparedness. Armed with this information, Winsper explains, coaches don’t just say, “Do what you did last time,” blindly believing the skaters will respond positively. Now, they know what to expect.

To that, Domer has added yet another system: fusionetics, which measures functional movement.

“Don’t forget: Speed skaters are like Nascar stock cars—they only go around the track in one direction,” says Domer. Consequently, their bodies become imbalanced. That leads to stress across their backs—it doesn’t help that they have to skate bent-over to cheat wind resistance—as well as tight hips and IT bands. “Put them in the gym like that doing overhead squats, and if they also have poor ankle flexion, you’re setting them up for injury,” says Winsper. By testing the skaters’ responses to recent workouts, and monitoring for any loss of mobility, the coaches have managed to help injured skaters recover and get back on the ice 60% faster.

That’s also why the team spends so much time on functional movement, rather than weight work, Winsper says. Think about it: The skaters’ on-ice training sessions might last upwards of two hours. They hardly need more quad work. But these athletes, like a lot of us, do need constant work on their cores. That’s why Under Armour includes a regular cycle of suspension-trainer work focused on cycling joints through high-stress movements, neglected muscle groups (like hips, lats, and traps), and on the entire thoracic spine. And when they do use weights, “we’re teaching functional sequences, like the Turkish getup,” Winsper says.

Skaters are movement athletes. “Rather than put weights in their hands and have them do a squat,” Winsper says, they need to move around more. And, he argues, the same goes for any athlete who doesn’t want to only be good at lifting weights. Another focus of the overhaul: diet. “It can’t just be calories,” says Domer. Mantia adds: “If you’re eating poorly, you can really feel it.”

At past competitions, nutrition options were often limited to fast food. To figure out how his body responded best, Mantia used the MyFitnessPal app to track all of his food—for an entire year. And he weighed it all, too.

“I did the full test,” he said. “I did no dairy. I did caveman. Eventually what I learned was that the quality of food matters most, and the timing is huge. You need to replenish your glycogen stores right

after a workout. It makes a huge difference in soreness.” Plus, if the team members can’t control their diets, they might wind up gaining weight. “Add just 2lbs, and around these corners your legs are going to feel it,” Domer adds. Luckily, in South Korea, the team will have its own dining hall.

They’ll also have their own tai chi coach. Why tai chi? “Because we wanted them to try movements where they were a little bit uncomfortable,” Domer explains. “Then we worked on techniques to get their minds back to a relaxed state.” These events come down to hundredths of a second. “We wanted to leave no stone unturned, so if our athletes can find ways to deal with discomfort, they can relax. And if they relax, they conserve energy.”

Skating, Mantia says, “is really about being smooth”—like trying to line up 30 golf balls and to hit every one the same, with the same form, over and over. “To do that, the tai chi helps. I’m trying for 98%. Try for 100%, and you’re grunting, you’re not smooth. So I need calm and consistency to do everything just right.”

That’s a good analogy for Under Armour’s effort with U.S. Speed Skating: doing absolutely everything right. Now, with all of that work and preparation, the hope is it will finally pay off on the ice.

UNDER ARMOUR'S OLYMPIC SPEED SKATING SUIT LOOKS TO DEFEAT PHYSICS

<https://www.wired.com/story/under-armour-olympic-speed-skating-suit/>

THE SPEED SKATING suit has always been the technical marvel of the Winter Olympics. With high-tech fabrics and unusual construction, it's designed to eke out every bit of athletic optimization. In a sport where a thousandth of a second can determine who gets a medal and who doesn't, athletes rely on technology to give them an edge. "We're trying to get the body to be more aerodynamic than it is in its natural state," says Clay Dean, chief innovation officer at Under Armour, the company behind the suit the US speed skating team will wear in PyeongChang this February.

Speed skaters wage a battle with physics every time they race. As their muscular bodies cut through the air at more than 30 mph, they leave a trail of drag in their wake. The key to winning (against physics and humans alike) is to reduce the amount of air resistance a body produces. Part of it is stance—to minimize their body's effect, skaters fold themselves over, keeping their backs flat like a table top—and part of it is suit.

"All we can do is prove through science, through construction, and through material that we've given them the best possible tools to do their job." — Clay Dean, chief innovation officer at Under Armour
Under Armour's new suit is an overhaul to the Mach 39, the controversial uniform that many blamed for the US team's poor performance in Sochi. In 2014, not a single US speed skater medaled, despite the high prospects going into the Olympics. Under Armour was a natural scapegoat.

In the lead up to the game, the company heralded the Mach 39 as the fastest suit ever designed. The bodysuits were made from a dimpled polyurethane material designed to divert air drag; designers placed a large, latticed vent in the back of the suit to let the athletes bodies breathe. Athletes claimed that the vent allowed too much air to enter the suit, creating a vacuum behind them that slowed their speed. Under Armour and US Speedskating say the technology wasn't to blame, citing an internal report conducted after the Sochi Olympics.¹

This year's suit has no vent. Instead, it's stitched together from three fabrics like a couture gown. One of those fabrics, a white nylon spandex mix called H1, runs down the suit's arms and legs in patches. The fabric's jacquard weave creates an almost imperceptible roughness in the surface. "I would describe it as a very fine grit sandpaper," says Chris Yu, director of integrated technologies at Specialized, the company responsible for the hundreds of hours of wind tunnel testing the suit underwent.

The texture creates pockets in the surface that make the suit more breathable. It also makes the suit more aerodynamic. Yu explains that anything punching a hole in the air will leave a wake or vacuum behind it. Speed skaters need to make that hole as small as possible. Cylindrical objects like arms and legs are particularly troublesome since wind tends to wrap around them, creating vacuum that can slow skaters' speed. Anywhere you see the H1 fabric is a trouble spot for wind resistance. Under Armour and Specialized claim the small dimples on the surface of the suit disrupt the airflow ever so slightly, causing the air to re-energize and reattach to the limbs so the vacuum is reduced. "Call it the golf ball dimple effect, if you will," Yu says.

Golf balls have dimples across the entirety of their surface because there's no way to account for how the ball will fly through the air. Skaters, on the other hand, move in controlled and predictable ways, making only left turns as they sprint around the track. This predictability allowed the designers to position the H1 material in precise locations on the suit. "You can't add roughness willy nilly," Yu says. "If you add too much you'll introduce more drag; add too little and you're not re-energizing the air quite enough."

The rest of the suit is made from a stretchy polyurethane fabric that's designed to lay flush against the skaters skin, even when they're folded over. Dean says Under Armour decided to sew the suit with an asymmetrical seam that runs from the lower left leg to the right shoulder, which reduces bunching and allows the skaters more freedom of movement during their left turns. It's a small but significant detail that the design team decided to incorporate after analyzing the particular movements skaters make on the ice—the low stance, swinging arms, and right leg that constantly crosses over the left. They then spent more than two years testing the aerodynamics of the suit inside Specialized's wind tunnel, ensuring that the suit met performance standards in every position skaters adopt during a race.

In the lead-up to Sochi, Under Armour kept the Mach 39 so tightly under wraps that the athletes didn't get to test the new design in competition. This time, the athletes have been wearing the suits in practice and competition since last winter, while seamstress nip and tuck the material to tailor-fit it to each skater. It's a long-term design process, but Dean says it's worth it to make a suit he eagerly claims is faster, better, and more advanced than what they made for Sochi. "We believe they do give us an advantage," he says. "It's a faster skating suit than what we had before."

It's an enthusiasm that Dean tempers when he recalls the backlash from the 2014 Olympics. If Under Armour has learned anything in the last few years, it's that a bit of managing expectations can go a long way. And that a suit, even the fastest in the world, is only a small piece of why athletes find themselves on the podium. "There's no guarantees in competition," Dean adds. "All we can do is prove through science, through construction, and through material that we've given them the best possible tools to do their job."