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AT Special Feature:

Olympic Trial Blog by AT Student Intern, Matt Martinez



Omaha '08.....

Day 1 Prelims-

Hey everybody just letting you all know how things are going here in the Midwest. Morning prelims- This morning I sat in the stands with my high school teammate Tim Freeman's parents and fellow De La Salle Spartan Tim Smith. Our seats are actually pretty good, even though they're in the upper deck. We're right behind the starting blocks, so we can see all the swimmers coming in from the ready room. I could feel the excitement from the very first event, the men's 400 IM. While I was mostly excited about watching the powers: Michael Phelps, Ryan Lochte, Robert Margalis, and Alex Vanderkaay, I couldn't help but get a little adrenaline rush from watching local swimmer, Campolindo High School alum Scott Lathrope, who finished with a 4:28.14. At the end of the event, Lochte (4:13.3 and Phelps (4:13.43) were seeded first and second, respectively, going into finals. The next event of the morning was the women's 100 fly. There was an abundance of local talent in this race. In heat two, College Park Senior and my teammate on Terrapins Rachel O'Brien, touched at 1:02.75. Then the very next heat, Miramonte grad Katie Ure, who now swims with UC Santa Barbra, finished in 1:02.14. Later on, Clayton Valley and Stanford alum Laura Davis, who is competing in her third Olympic Trials, swam to her best time in years with a 1:01.04. Finally, in the later heats, Campolindo and UCLA grad Kim Vandenberg finished 12th out of 16 going into tonight's semifinals with a 59.57. The top seeded swimmers going into the semifinals were Christine Magnuson (57.84), Elaine Breeden (58.03), and Rachel Komisarz (58.44). Next up was the men's 400 freestyle. The only local swimmer in this event was former De La Salle Spartan Matt Biel, who finished with a 3:56.00. The top three heading into the finals were Peter Vanderkaay (3:48.06), Erik Vendt (3:48.25), and Larsen Jensen (3:48.59). This looked to be a very close and exciting race at night. After the men's 400 free, it was time for the women's 400 IM. In the very first heat, recently graduated Las Lomas Knight and Walnut Creek Aquabear Shelley Harper swam in with a 4:59.21. A few heats later it was former Campolindo swimmer Lauren Beaudreau, who now swims with NOVA of Virginia and the University of Richmond, who finished with a 5:03.58. Two heats after Beaudreau was another Miramonte grad, Heather White, who now swims with UC Berkeley. Heather touched with a 4:55.96. The top three finishers who headed into the top 8 tonight were Katie Hoff (4:34.59), 15 year-old

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Elizabeth Beisel (4:35.76), and Julia Smit (4:37.19). The top two finishers, Hoff and Beisel, used very different race strategies. While Hoff tried to stay smooth and conserve energy for tonight's finals, Beisel went for an all-out effort, actually falling below world record pace for a few laps. It was a preview for what would turn out to be a very exciting final in the evening. The last event in prelims was the men's 100 breast. My buddy Tim Freeman was in the first heat, getting a personal best with a 1:04.08. Next up was Acalanes grad and former NCS record holder Nick Ferrif. He surprised everyone, dropping around two and a half seconds, finishing in a 1:01.98, putting himself into 12th going into semifinals. After Ferrif was Las Lomas alum John Dorr. John finished with a 1:02.67. Finally, Terrapin Sean Mahoney turned in an impressive swim, but unfortunately was disqualified for a one-handed touch on his turn. Sean still has his better event, the 200 breast, in which he is the 8th fastest American. The top three going into semis were Brendan Hansen (59.84), Mark Gangloff (1:00.10), and Eric Shanteau (1:00.91).

Day 1 Finals-

The final of the men's 400 IM ended up being one of the most exciting races I have ever seen. Ryan Lochte vs. Michael Phelps. Defending World Champion vs. World Champion Silver Medalist. In the first 100, Phelps charged to the lead, and held it throughout the backstroke leg. Then, during breaststroke, Lochte charged, outsplitting Phelps by almost two seconds. By the end of breast, they were virtually tied, with Phelps owning a .02 advantage. But in the end, the World Champion had the final say, bringing the race home in freestyle, finishing with a 4:05.25, while Lochte finished second with a 4:06.08. Both swimmers beat the previous world record. Next, in the semifinals of the women's 100 butterfly, it was again Christine Magnuson, who is seeded first going into the top eight with an Olympic Trials meet record of 57.50. Kim Vandenberg is seeded eighth with a 59.34. The men's 400 freestyle, a race where the competitors are usually spread out because of the race's distance, turned out to be a trench fight. Four swimmers, Klete Keller, Erik Vendt, Peter Vanderkaay, and Larsen Jensen fought the whole race for the two Olympic Team spots. In the end, it turned out to be Jensen (3:43.53), who broke Vanderkaay's American record in the event. Fortunately for Vanderkaay, he made the Olympic team as well, finishing only .2 behind Jensen, so he'll have another shot at that American record. In the women's 400 IM, Katie Hoff proved that conserving energy in the morning does help you go faster at night. She dropped more than three seconds from this morning, retaking her world record and earning a spot on the Olympic team, touching in with a 4:31.12. And, it seems that Elizabeth Beisel had some more in the tank after this morning, dropping two seconds and finishing second with a 4:32.87. Finally, in the semifinals of the men's 100 breast, it was all Brendan Hansen, who barley missed his world record of 59.13, stopping the clock at 59.24. Expect Hansen to go for the record tomorrow night. Nick Ferrif, who surprised many by his incredible performance in the morning, added time and failed to qualify for the top eight. There's your Day One Omaha Olympic Trials report. More to come in the next week. Go USA! Go Terrapins!

Day 2 Prelims-

WOW! As if last night's finals weren't exciting enough, two world records and an American record, I thought the pool could cool down for this mornings prelims. I thought wrong. This morning started off with a bang in the women's 100 backstroke. In the second-to-last heat, Hayley Gregory of Longhorn Aquatics, who came into the meet ranked fourth in the world in the event, broke Natalie Coughlan's world record with a time of 59.15. It brought a formerly quiet crowd to their feet, since no one expected anything exiting in the morning prelims. In the very next heat was Carondelet alum and former Terrapin Natalie Coughlan, now also the former world record holder in this event. Coughlan must have seen Gregory's swim as a challenge, retaking the record with a 59.03. This sets up for what should be a very exciting semifinal tonight. There were also a bunch of local swimmers in the mix. Miramonte alum Heather White, who swam the 400 IM yesterday, finished with a 1:04.86. Karen Wang of Pleasanton Seahawks and Foothill High swam to a 1:04.39. The very next heat 13-year old Madison White of Crow Canyon Sharks actually finished 26th overall with a personal best 1:02.68. Two heats later, former Carondelet and Terrapins star Julianne McLane finished 20th with a 1:02.50. Another Terrapin, Presley Bard, tied for 17th with a 1:02.35. Bard would eventually win a swimoff and fall into the top 16 semifinal tonight. In the final heat, lost in the excitement of Coughlan's world record, was another Carondelet backstroker, this time it was Lauren Rogers, who is seeded fourth going into tonight. While there were not many local swimmers in the men's 200 freestyle, just De La Salle alum and Arizona Wildcat Matt Biel, who finished with a 1:52.34. The top three going into tonight's semis are Michael Phelps (1:46.63), Ryan Lochte (1:46.83), and Peter Vanderkaay (1:47.04). Phelps is the world record holder in the event,

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breaking Ian Thorpe's old standard last March in Melbourne, going 1:43.86. So it wouldn't be a bad bet that Phelps would go for the record tonight in semifinals. Next up was the women's 100 breast. The first local swimmer was Shaila Yoder of Las Lomas High School and Crow Canyon Sharks. Shaila finished with a best time of 1:12.12. A little while later her club teammate Kirstyn Colonias, who attends San Ramon Valley High School, touched in with a 1:12.51. Not long after was former Carondelet Cougar and Current UC Santa Barbara Gaucho Katy Freeman, sister of my friend Tim Freeman. She sliced .59 off her time, going a 1:10.29 and finishing 21st. In the second-to-last heat, NCS record holder and Las Lomas junior Kasey Carlson swam right on her best time, stopping the clock at 1:09.12, placing her ninth going into tonight's semifinals. The top three women heading into the semis are national high school record holder Jessica Hardy (1:06.85), NCAA champion Rebecca Soni (1:06.90), and Athens silver medalist Tara Kirk (1:07.06). The next event was the men's 100 meter backstroke. Like the 200 free, there was only one local swimmer in this event. Walnut Creek Aquabear Chasen Nick finished at 57.70. The top seed tonight will be former Stanford star Randal Bal, who scared the world record, touching at 53.28. Second was Matt Grevers (53.69), and third was Indiana star and NCAA champion in the 100 backstroke Ben Hesen (53.88). World record holder Aaron Piersol qualified sixth with a 54.14 and World Championship silver medalist Ryan Lochte is fourth with a 53.96. The final event of the morning was the ladies' 400 freestyle. Another 13-year old swam in this event, this time it was the Terrapins' Chelsea Chenault, winning her heat and finishing 24th with a time of 4:15.22. Also in Chenault's heat was former Foothill High star Jennifer Narum, who placed 44th with a 4:17.25. At the end of the event it was Katie Hoff, who looks to keep her magic alive from last night's 400 IM world record, placing first. Next was Allison Schmitt (4:05.72), and third was 1500 freestyle world champion and world record holder Kate Ziegler (4:05.72). That's all for prelims. Next up is the finals report in a few hours.

Day 2 Finals-

After a very exciting morning, complete with two world records in the women's 100 backstroke, the Qwest arena was ready for some more action. In the first event of the night, the women's 100 backstroke, it was another duel between world record holder Natalie Coughlin and former world record holder Hayley McGregory. McGregory swam in the first semifinal, clocking a 59.48. Second in her heat was Carondelet alum and Terrapin Lauren Rogers, who is seeded fourth in the top 8. As for Coughlin, she swam a tad slower than this morning, finishing at 59.74. Only .05 behind Coughlin was Margaret Hoelzer at 59.79, becoming only the third American woman to break the one minute barrier. Also, Terrapin Presley Bard qualified sixth, so if you count Coughlin, that's three Terrapins in the final! The next event was the semifinal of the men's 200 freestyle. Qualifying first was Ryan Lochte, who won the first semifinal with a 1:45.61. Finishing second to Lochte in that heat was Ricky Berens, who came in at 1:46.77. The second fastest qualifier going into the final was Michael Phelps, the world record holder in the event. Phelps swam in the second semifinal and touched at 1:45.64. Second to Phelps in the second semifinal was Peter Vanderkaay, at 1:46.08. It must also be noted that the threesome of Phelps, Lochte, and Vanderkaay were all members of the United States' world record-setting and world champion 800 freestyle relay. The other member of the relay, Klete Keller, qualified sixth, finishing at 1:46.78. Next up was the final of the women's 100 butterfly. Starring in this heat was the top seed and Olympic Trials meet record holder Christine Magnuson, who was only .16 off Natalie Coughlin's American record, 57.34, in semifinals. The final was bittersweet for Magnuson, she didn't break Coughlin's record, but she did qualify for her first Olympic Team touching at 58.11. Finishing second and grabbing the other spot in the Team was Elaine Breeden, who was only .10 behind Magnuson with a 58.21. Moraga native and Campolindo alum Kim Vandenberg finished seventh with a time of 58.84. Right after the women's butterfly was the final of the men's 100 breaststroke. Coming off a strong semifinal swim of 59.24, Brendan Hansen was looking to break the world record. But, like Magnuson in the butterfly, his record goal eluded him in finals. Hansen stopped the clock at 59.93, well off his world record, but it was enough to put him on his second Olympic Team. Finishing second was Mark Gangloff, who also added time from his prelim swim, going a 1:00.42. The semifinal of the women's 100 breaststroke followed the example of the women's 100 fly and men's 100 breast, not producing any extraordinary times. The big names, however, did advance to the final, with NCAA champion in the yards discipline of the event Rebecca Soni qualifying first. Placing second was Annie Chandler, who cruised in with a 1:08.06. Also, 1996, 2000, and 2004 Olympian Amanda Beard qualified seventh and will try to make her fourth Olympic Team tomorrow night. After breaststroke came the semifinal of the men's 100 backstroke. Of course, the favorites Aaron Piersol and Ryan Lochte qualified for the final, 53.26 and 53.37, respectively. The surprise of the event was Randal Bal in the second heat, almost breaking Piersol's world record of 52.98. Bal touched in an Olympic

Trials record 53.09. Matt Grevers, a Northwestern grad who currently swims for Tucson Ford Dealers, qualified third with a 53.32. The last event of the night was the final of the women's 400 freestyle. The favorite in the race was Katie Hoff, who broke the world record last night in the 400 IM, but fans couldn't forget about Kate Ziegler, who owns the world record in the 1500 freestyle. In the end, it was Hoff, who barely missed her American record in the event, finishing in 4:02.32. Right behind her was Ziegler, who, because of a last lap charge, earned the second spot on the team, touching the wall at 4:03.92. That rounds up tonight's finals. Tomorrow morning's prelims include the women's 200 free, the men's 200 fly, and the women's 200 IM. Watch for my blog the rest of the week as I tell the story of each session at the Olympic Swim Team Trials.

Day 3 Prelims-

I'll have a report on what I've been doing here as well as the finals report After an eventful day two, including two world records and many new Olympians, the Qwest Center cooled down for a pretty uneventful morning session. The first event of the day was the women's 200 freestyle. It was the final event of 13-year old Terrapin star Chelsea Chenault, who closed out her first Olympic Trials with a solid 2:03.42, placing her 74th of 103 total swimmers. The other swimmer from the Bay Area was another Terrapins star, Kate Dwelley, who at the 2004 Trials finished eighth in this event. Kate touched in at a 1:59.79, which places her eleventh going into tonight's semifinals. The top three qualifiers for the semis are Katie Hoff (1:57.72), Allison Schmitt (1:58.76), and Caroline Burckle (1:59.09). It must be noted that all the girls who qualified for the semifinals tonight swam under two minutes flat. At the 2004 Trials, only five girls broke the barrier Next up was the men's 200 butterfly. Once again it was an event where the only local swimmer was Campolindo grad Scott Lathrop who made a good effort to get out in front on the first 100, but couldn't hold on at the end of the race, finishing with a 2:03.85. Michael Phelps, who has owned every world record in this event since first breaking it at the 2001 World Championships, is seeded third for tonight's semifinal with a 1:55.85. Phelps has some work to do tonight, having to compete with the top seed, his Club Wolverine teammate Davis Tarwater, who touched at a 1:55.15 and Gil Stoval, who came in with a 1:55.72. The final event of the morning was the women's 200 IM. The first local girl was Heather White, competing in her third event so far in these trials. Heather finished 28th with a time of 2:17.74. Also competing in multiple events was Lauren Beaudreau, who finished the 200 IM with a time of 2:22.56. The next local product was 15-year old Maya Dirado, finishing 23rd with a time of 2:17.18. Finally, Terrapin Laura Davis finished 18th with a great swim of 2:16.06. Katie Hoff was the top seed overall, tying her own trials record with a time of 2:12.02. Finishing second to Hoff was Natalie Coughlin (2:12.21) and third was Whitney Myers (2:12.24). More from Omaha tonight in finals!

Day 3 finals-

After prelims, my friend Tim Smith and I left with Kasey Carlson's family to go do a little sightseeing. Kasey, her sister Taylor, and her mom and aunt went to a mall a few miles away from Omaha and Tim, Kasey's dad, uncle, and grandpa went to the Strategic Air Force Museum. After the museum, we got something to eat and ended up going back to the pool to hang out before finals started. At the arena, Tim and I went to the Aquazone. The Aquazone is this huge convention center set up with tons of booths and shops exclusively for the swimming community. There's an official Speedo store that I have visited quite often actually. Also, there is a booth dedicated to the development of the Speedo LZR Racer swimsuit, as well as a bunch of booths set up by USA Swimming's sponsors, including Toyota, Panasonic, and Omega. Tim and I had plenty of time before finals started so we hung out in the Aquazone for awhile. When finals finally got ready to start, we stayed with our tradition of not sitting in our actual seats and sneaking down to the first row. So far it's worked fine; we've stayed with the Carlsons and have had tons of fun. But since the meet's been going on longer, more people have started showing up and now there's no room for us down below. So tonight we sat on the other side of the pool with Madison White's family, still in the first row! First off was the semifinal of the women's 200 free. This was setting up for tomorrow night's final, with Katie Hoff continuing her dominance of the women's events, grabbing the number one seed with a time of 1:57.10. Second was Allison Schmitt (1:57.92), and third was Julia Smit (1:58.48). Also, Kim Vandenberg is seeded fifth going into finals. Liberty High grad and Terrapin Kate Dwelley just missed the final, placing ninth with a time of 1:58.90. The second event of the night was the final of the men's 200 freestyle. Michael Phelps, the world record holder, gave the 12,500 fans something to cheer about, coming very close to his world record of 1:43.86, finishing at 1:44.10. Although he missed the world mark, he did break the Olympic Trials and US Open records. Joining Phelps on the Olympic Team were Peter Vanderkaay (1:45.85), Ricky Berens (1:46.14), Klete Keller (1:46.20), Dave Walters (1:46.64), and Eric Vendt (1:46.95). There are six men on the team

in the 200 free because there needs to be enough men for the 800 free relay, four men for the 4x100 relay and two alternates. The next event was the women's 100 meter backstroke. After a very exciting prelims, where Hayley McGregory and Natalie Coughlin set and reset the world record, the swimmers were primed for big time drops in finals. Coughlin proved once again that she is the queen of backstroke, becoming the first woman to break 59 seconds, touching at 58.97. The other qualifier for the Olympic Team was Margaret Hoelzer, who tied Coughlin's old world record going into the meet, finishing at 59.21. McGregory, who is still the second fastest woman in history, finished third at 59.42. Terrapin swimmers Lauren Rogers (1:00.7 and Presley Bard (1:01.03) placed fourth and fifth, respectively. After the women's backstroke, it was time for the men's 100. After slowing it down a little in prelims and semifinals, Aaron Piersol showed everyone why he is the world record holder in the event, winning in another world record time of 52.89. Piersol has held the world record in the 100 backstroke now for four years, dating back to when he first broke Lenny Krazelburg's record leading off the USA 4x100 medley relay in Athens. Finishing second was Matt Grevers, who, after touching fourth at the 50, charged into a spot on the Olympic Team, stopping the clock at 53.19. Another sprint final came after the backstrokes, this time it was the women's 100 breast. After adding almost two seconds to her best time in semifinals, Jessica Hardy put the pedal to the metal and qualified for her first Olympic Team, winning the final with a 1:06.87. Second was Sydney Olympic medalist Megan Jendrick, who touched .01 ahead of third place finisher Tara Kirk, going 1:07.50. After all the finals, it was time for another semifinal, this time the men's 200 butterfly. This morning Michael Phelps took it very easy, not wanting to exert himself too much more than he has to, and he qualified third going into this race. Tonight he left no doubt of who was the best 200 butterfly in the world, qualifying third for the finals tomorrow with a time of 1:54.02. His teammate Davis Tarwater qualified second with a 1:54.72. Phelps looks to dominate the field tomorrow night, in yet another event in which he owns the world record. Finally, the last event of the night, the women's 200 IM, Katie Hoff again let everyone know that she is the new face of American women's swimming, qualifying first for the final with a time of 2:09.94, only .17 off Natalie Coughlin's American Record, which she set in early June. Speaking of Coughlin, she qualified third for the final with a time of 2:11.72. It was clear that Coughlin felt physically and mentally tired from her 100 backstroke performance, since her first 50 put her almost half a second under world record pace, then fell off the pace as the race went on. Nevertheless, tomorrow night, Coughlin will be rested and ready to race, so expect something special from her then. Also, Elizabeth Beisel, who already has a spot on the Olympic Team in the 400 IM, is tied for eighth with Dagny Knutson at 2:13.75. There will be a swim off tomorrow between the two ladies to decide who will be in the final at night.

Day 4 Prelims-

This morning there were only three events; the men's 100 freestyle, women's 200 butterfly, and the men's 200 breaststroke. The 100 free, which has always been one of my favorite events, provided enough entertainment today for anyone to get a rush. In the thirteenth heat, defending Olympic Trials Champ and American record holder Jason Lezak reminded everyone how fast he is, breaking his American record of 48.17, coming in a 48.15. The celebration would be short lived, however, when in the next heat, Garrett Weber-Gale of Longhorn Aquatics smashed Lezak's time, stopping the clock at 47.78, making Weber-Gale the first American to break 48 seconds. And in the very next heat after Weber-Gale, the second member of the sub-48 club was introduced. This time it was none other than Michael Phelps, who touched in at 47.92, placing him second going into finals. However, Phelps will not be swimming the 100 free tonight in semifinals, instead moving his focus to the final of the 200 butterfly, in which he is seeded first. Also note local swimmer Scott Vogelgesang, a Cal High grad, finished at 52.14 and 2004 Olympian Ian Crocker was disqualified for a false start. The next event was the women's 200 butterfly. Julianne McLane, Carondelet graduate and Terrapin swimmer got a best time, swimming a 2:16.11. Also competing was Neptune Swimming's Maya DiRado (2:14.57) as well as NCS record holder in the 100 butterfly, Amanda Sims, who will be swimming in the semifinal tonight, placing 13th with a time of 2:11.93. In Sims' heat was Terrapin Laura Davis, who tied for 17th with a time of 2:12.75 and was forced into a swimoff. Though she gave a great effort, Davis lost the swimoff and unless someone scratches out in the semifinal, Davis will not get a second swim. Finally, Kim Vandenberg grabbed the third overall seed with a time of 2:09.37. The Campolindo grad is the second fastest American of all time and the 200 butterfly silver medalist at last year's World Championships. The last event of the morning was the men's 200 breaststroke. Former world record holder Brendan Hansen qualified first, cruising in at 2:11.29, well off his American record of 2:08.50. Second was Scott Usher (2:11.41), and third was Scott Spann (2:11.88). Qualifying seventh was Terrapin Sean Mahoney with a best time of 2:13.37. Tim Freeman, of the Aquabears and

De La Salle, finished in 2:23.61, and fellow NCS breaststroker Brandon Fischer, of Pleasanton Seahawks and Granada High School, placed 45th with a time of 2:19.56. That's it for prelims. I'll be back in a few hours with the final report. 7. Matt Martinez, Terrapins & ATOM Intern, on July 3rd, 2008 at 2:06 pm Said: Edit Comment

Day 4 finals-

Tonight the semifinal of my second favorite event, the 100 freestyle, led off the session. After a very exciting prelim session, where the American record was broken twice in back-to-back heats, Jason Lezak again wowed the crowd in Omaha. Lezak became the third-fastest man in the history of the event, clocking a 47.58, only .08 off Frenchman Alain Bernard's world record of 47.50. Lezak is the number one seed going into finals, while previous American record holder Garrett Weber-Gale qualified third with a 48.35. Qualifying second was former Arizona State Sun Devil Nick Brunelli with a time of 48.29. In the final of the women's 200 freestyle, it was once again all Katie Hoff, who reset her own American record with a time of 1:55.88. With that swim, Hoff became the second fastest performer of all time, second only to world record holder Laure Manaudou, who went 1:55.52 at last year's world championships. Joining Hoff on the Olympic Team were Allison Schmitt (1:55.92), Julia Smit (1:56.73), Caroline Burckle (1:57.93), Moraga native Kim Vandenberg (1:58.02), and Christine Marshall (1:58.02). After the women's 200 free came the final of the men's 200 butterfly. As with almost everything he swims, Michael Phelps showed why he is a force to be reckoned with. Phelps finished in at 1:52.20, only .11 off his world record. Phelps broke the US Open and Olympic Trials records with his swim. Joining Phelps on the Olympic Team is 200 yard butterfly NCAA champion Gil Stoval, who stopped the clock at 1:53.86. The very next event was actually the semifinal of the woman's 200 butterfly. Elaine Breeden continued to shine in the event, breaking Mary T. Meagher's Olympic Trials record with a time of 2:07.33, a record that had stood since 1984. Qualifying second was high school sensation Kathleen Hersey (2:08.03) and third was Mary Descenza (2:08.82). Also, Kim Vandenberg, who just finished the 200 freestyle, qualified fourth with a time of 2:08.86. Next up was the semifinals of the men's 200 breaststroke. Qualifying first was American record holder Brendan Hansen with a time of 2:09.60. Hansen was the world record holder in the 200 until about a month ago when his Japanese rival Kosuke Kitajima knocked almost a second off Hansen's old world standard, going 2:07.51. Look for Hansen to make an effort to break that record tomorrow night in finals. Qualifying second was Eric Shanteau (2:10.24) and third was Scott Spann (2:10.38). Terrapin swimmer Sean Mahoney ended up tenth with a time of 2:13.61. The last event of the night was the final of the women's 200 IM. What can you say, Katie Hoff is turning herself into one of the greatest swimmers of all time. Hoff set her second American record of the night, breaking Natalie Coughlin's record of 2:09.77, going 2:09.71. Hoff qualified for the Olympic Team in her fifth event, after already earning a spot in the 200 freestyle, 400 freestyle, 400 IM, and 4x200 freestyle relay. Also qualifying in another event was Natalie Coughlin, who was just off the pace at 2:10.32, outtouching Ariana Kukors, who went 2:10.40. Now, many people talk about the heartbreak of finishing third at trials. Finishing third at the Olympic Trials and not making the Olympic Team can be devastating for many people. It's worse than finishing fourth at the Olympics, since at least you got to the Olympics in the first place. Tonight I noticed this more than most, with a bunch of the races coming straight down to the wire. In the final of the men's 200 butterfly, it was a forgone conclusion that Michael Phelps would make the Olympic Team. But since the '04 Trials, Club Wolverine's Davis Tarwater has emerged as that second 200 butterflyer. Tarwater was the second seed going into the final tonight by almost a full second over Gil Stoval. At the end of the race, when Stoval finished second and Tarwater finished third, Tarwater seemed so disgusted with his performance that he climbed out of the pool immediately, not waiting for post race announcements or congratulations from any of his competitors. It was a sad example of how dreams can be destroyed in two minutes. The same also for Ariana Kukors, who, when leading Natalie Coughlin by a hair at the finish, took an extra stroke and missed the Olympic Team by .08. While I didn't notice any negative body language, I can only imagine the grief that must be overcoming Kukors. Anyone who is in this situation must be feeling horrible and I think the world of anyone who can beat this sadness. A great example of getting over a third place finish is Brendan Hansen, who placed third in both the 100 and 200 breaststrokes at the 2000 trials, and is now the world record holder in the 100 breast. The best thing to do with a third place finish? Use it as motivation during the next four years of training. More to come tomorrow during prelims.....

Day 6 Prelims-

HAPPY FOURTH OF JULY! After a day's absence, I'm back with another US Olympic Trials report from Omaha, Nebraska. The first event on Friday morning, the men's 50 free, is in my opinion the best event in all of

swimming. It's swimming at its finest. When you were a kid playing around in the neighborhood pool, you didn't say to your friend, "I'll race you from here to there and back eight times doing all the strokes." No, it's always from here to there as fast as you can go, and that's what the 50 meter freestyle is all about. For the last eight years, no American had done it better than Gary Hall Jr. That is, until new sprint superstar Cullen Jones jumped into the water in the 14th heat this morning. Jones smashed into the wall at a 21.59, breaking Hall's American, US Open, and Olympic Trials meet record of 21.76, while also making him the fourth fastest man in history. Jones, an African American, is regarded as swimming's 'great black hope', since he is making a habit of dominating a traditionally 'white country club' sport. He has given inspiration to many aspiring young African American swimmers all over the world. Finishing second behind Jones was US National Teammate Ben Wildman-Tobriner, with a time of 21.68, also swimming under Hall's former record. For those of you who don't know, Wildman-Tobriner is a product of Lick-Wilmerding High School in San Francisco, and is also the North Coast Section record holder in the 50 yard freestyle. Wildman-Tobriner's time puts him seventh all-time in the splash 'n dash, an event that he has excelled at for years, eventually resulting in a World Championship title last year. Qualifying third was now former American record holder Gary Hall Jr, whose time of 21.89 was his fastest in eight years. 100 free Olympians Garrett Weber Gale, Nathan Adrian, and Jason Lezak all tied for fourth with a 22.05. Round Hill Country Club coach and Walnut Creek Aquabear Chris Horner finished with a 23.66. Also, for those of you who have been asking for DACA boys, Shayne Fleming, 16, was the youngest guy competing in the event, placing 67th with a time of 23.29. The next event, the women's 800 freestyle, was about as far away from the 50 free as you could get. The pace completely changed from an all-out, turbo charged effort to a more relaxed, but strategy-filled race. In the first heat there were two local girls, Shelley Harper of the Aquabears and Jennifer Narum of Pleasanton. Harper, competing in her second event at trials, placed 49th with a 9:00.58 and Narum was 36th with an 8:52.83. A couple heats later another Pleasanton swimmer raced, this time it was Catherine Breed. The soon-to-be sophomore at Amador Valley was swimming alongside Katie Hoff, so it would be understandable if her nerves got to her, but she handled herself wonderfully, finishing 23rd with a time of 8:48.90. Remember folks, she's only 15. As for Hoff, she is seeded second going into the final tonight, cruising to an 8:29.91. Hoff is seeded second to Kate Ziegler, who went an 8:29.39. Hoff, who defeated Ziegler in the 200 and 400 freestyles earlier in the meet, has her work cut out for her, as Ziegler is the defending World Champion/world record holder in the 1500 freestyle as well as the second fastest woman in the history of the 800. Tonight's final looks to be an exciting one. Staying with the trend of going from sprint-to-distance-to-sprint, the next event was the men's 100 butterfly. Ian Crocker, who was disqualified in his only other event, the 100 free, was looking for some redemption in his specialty. The world record holder destroyed the field, posting the top time of the morning with a 51.52. Second was Matt Grevers, who earlier earned a spot on the Olympic Team in the 100 backstroke, qualified second with a 52.21. Michael Phelps, swimming in his sixth event of the week, is seeded third, winning his heat with a very easy 52.26. Campolindo grad Zach Disbrow finished with a 55.81, and swimming right next to him was former NCS champion and Casa Grande swimmer Ian Lentz, who touched at a 55.81. A few heats later was my teammate John Dwelley, a Liberty High School grad, who finished with a 54.35. The last event of the morning was the women's 200 backstroke. This event was especially nerve-racking for me and everyone I was sitting around, since I was hanging out with 13-year old Madison White's family. Madison was in lane one of the final heat and seeded with a 2:14.40 and was hoping to make a second swim in the event. Madison turned in a best time of 2:13.34, placing her fifteenth, making her the youngest finalist at the Olympic Trials. White will be joined in the semi finals by Carondelet graduate Julianne McLane, who is seeded ninth with a time of 2:12.70. Fifteen year old Elizabeth Beisel, who placed second in the 400 IM, is seeded first with a 2:07.44. Second is Hayley McGregory, who is now swimming with a vengeance after losing her world record and then her spot on the Olympic Team in the 100 backstroke. At the 2004 Trials, McGregory placed third in both backstroke events, so this may be her last chance to make the Olympic Team. I'm making sure to root for her along with McLane and White tonight in the semis. Also competing was Miramonte graduate Heather White, who finished her Trials program today with a time of 2:20.07, and Foothill's Karen Wang, only 16, touched in at a 2:19.35. More to come tonight...

Day 6 Finals-

Tonight could've been one of the most exciting finals yet. Two world records, the fastest 50 free semifinal ever, and two 'washed up' ladies making the team? This is too much. The first event was the semifinal of the men's 50 freestyle. Going into the semis, Cullen Jones, Ben Wildman-Tobriner, and Gary Hall Jr. were the only men to break 22 seconds. That may have been the fastest prelim swims in US history. The only question

was if the field could keep the effort going into semifinals. The answer to that question was a resounding YES! In what may have been the fastest 50 freestyle semifinal ever, five guys were under 22 seconds and two more were 22 very low. The field was headed by Ben Wildman-Tobriner, who bettered his time from prelims, touching at a 21.65. Next was new American record holder Cullen Jones at 21.71 and then Garrett Weber-Gale at 21.83. Finally, the last two men under 22 were Gary Hall with a 21.94 and Nick Brunelli at 21.99. The final tomorrow night will be an amazing show, and it seems that anyone in the field can make the team. In the top eight, there are Olympic, NCAA, and World champions, world record holders, American record holders, and countless of other accolades. This could possibly be the most star-studded final at the Olympic Trials this year. DON'T MISS IT TOMORROW NIGHT!! The second event of the evening was the final of the women's 200 breast. Now, one of the biggest stories going into these Olympic Trials was whether Amanda Beard could make her fourth Olympic Team. People were claiming she had not taken her training seriously enough, that she cared too much about modeling instead of swimming, her real job. Beard shut up any critics tonight, posing a time of 2:25.13, which was enough to place her second in the event and earn her spot on the Team. Finishing ahead of Beard was Rebecca Soni. Soni missed making the team in the 100 breast, even though she entered the meet as one of the favorites. She finally got her redemption with a clear victory in the 200 with a time of 2:22.60, narrowly missing Beard's American record of 2:22.44. Finishing third was 16-year old Caitlin Leverenz, coming in at 2:25.98. Look out for Leverenz at the 2012 Trials, she could be a lock for the Team. The very next final was the men's 200 backstroke. Before the World Championships last March, Aaron Piersol had not lost a 200 backstroke race since he was a fresh 17-year old at the Sydney Olympics in 2000, when he placed second to then-backstroke superstar Lenny Krayzelburg. At the Melbourne World Championships, Piersol lost the race and his world record to Ryan Lochte, so maybe the Torch had been passed from one backstroke great to the other. Tonight, Piersol had other plans. In one of the most exciting races of the Trials, Aaron Piersol showed the world why he is the defending Olympic Champion by defeating Ryan Lochte and tying the world record his rival had set more than a year ago. Piersol finished with a time of 1:54.32 and Lochte came in right after him, touching at 1:54.34. Both men were well ahead of the rest of the field, so this was not a race to see who would make the Olympic Team. Instead, it was more a race of pride. Would Piersol take back what had been his for seven years? Or had the tides really turned, and was Lochte the new man in backstroke? For now, it remains Piersol, but next month in Beijing, the two men will race again, this time for Olympic gold. The very next swim was the semifinal of the women's 200 backstroke. The top two ladies going into the final are fifteen year old Elizabeth Beisel (2:07.7 and Hayley McGregory (2:08.28). Those two are seeded about a second ahead of the rest of the field, so if everything shapes up like it's supposed to be, Beisel goes to the Olympics in yet another event and McGregory finally makes an Olympic Team. But the story that interested me about semifinals came out of lane eight of the second semifinal. Forget about the stars in that heat, Beisel and Margaret Hoelzer, and focus in on lane eight. There was thirteen year old Madison White of Crow Canyon Sharks, seeded fifteenth, and becoming the youngest swimmer at the meet to qualify for the semifinals. Madison ended up finishing twelfth, sixth in her heat. Finishing two spots behind White was fourteen year old Bonnie Brandon, so if there's two people to watch for in 2012, it could be those two. After the 200 backstrokes came the final of the men's 200 IM. This became yet another record-breaking performance for Michael Phelps, beating Ryan Lochte in another individual medley duel. Phelps came in at 1:54.80, shaving .18 off his previous world record. Now for those of you who watched, the race, you may have noticed that Lochte dominated Phelps in the breaststroke leg and made the race closer. This was not the case. After checking out the race splits, I noticed that Phelps and Lochte had the exact same breaststroke split, 33.60. Actually, the fastest breaststroke split of the race, 32.48, was turned in by third-place Eric Shanteau. Another point is that when it seemed that Phelps dominated the freestyle leg and moved to a victory, it was actually Lochte who outsplit Phelps, 27.12 to 27.23. A small margin, yes, but just as with Lochte seemingly destroying Phelps on the breaststroke leg, you can't always believe what you see. For those of you who think Amanda Beard is old for making the Olympic Team at age 26, remember that Dara Torres was winning a gold medal at the 1984 Olympics when Beard was just three years old. Dara Torres became the oldest US swimming Olympian ever at age 41 after winning the 100 free over Natalie Coughlin at this year's trials. Torres came in at 53.78, barely touching out a charging Coughlin by .05. Coughlin, the American record holder in the event, wasn't fazed by her losing to someone who could be her mother, as the two women joked around and congratulated each other in the water after the race. Also qualifying for the Olympics as members of the 4x100 free relay team were Arizona Wildcat Lacey Nymeyer, 100 breaststroke Trials champ Jessica Hardy, Cal Bear Emily Silver, and Julia Smit of Stanford Aquatics. The last event of the night was the semifinal of the men's 100 butterfly. Helping

shape what looks to be another race of Michael Phelps vs. Another Rival of His, Phelps and Ian Crocker qualified first and second for the final tomorrow night. Since they first dueled at the 2003 World Championships in this event, the two powers have been trading victories in all major competitions. Crocker is the 2003 and 2005 World Champion while Phelps is the 2004 Olympic gold medalist and 2007 World Champ. Those four races have been decided by margins of .12, .04, 1.25, and .05. Aside from the 1.25 seconds that separated them at the 2005 World Championships, their races have come down to the blink of an eye. So if you thought Phelps' races with Lochte have been exciting, you ?aint seen nothin? yet. Tomo Aside from the 1.25 seconds that separated them at the 2005 World Championships, their races have come down to the blink of an eye. So if you thought Phelps' races with Lochte have been exciting, you ?aint seen nothin? yet.

Day 7/8-

This is my last blog about trials, just playing a little catch up now. Saturday morning had the prelims of the women's 50 and the men's 1500 freestyle. And instead of going event by event, semifinal by semifinal and so on, I'll just recap prelims, semis, and finals for each event. In the women's 50, Kate Dweley, swimming in her final event at this years trials, got a best time of 25.89. Another Terrapin, Lauren Rogers, swimming in an off event (she's mostly a backstroker) did very well, tying for 44th with a time of 26.19. The final local swimmer was Campolindo graduate Lindsey Sharp, who swam right around her entry time and finished with a 26.38. As for the top sixteen, Lara Jackson, who swims for the University of Arizona and Tucson Ford Dealers, broke Dara Torres' American record in the event with at time of 24.50. Note that Jackson was wearing the Blue Seventy swimskin, which was very popular with the high schoolers this year at NCS. Torres qualified third for prelims with a time of 24.72, well off her best time of 24.53, the previous American record. Also, Jessica Hardy, who was already on the team in the 100 breaststroke, qualified a surprising second, .13 behind Jackson with a time of 24.63. In semifinals, Torres' took back what was hers and broke Jackson's new American record, coming in at a 24.38. Hardy again took the second spot, also going under the previous US standard with a time of 24.48. Jackson, who instead of the Blue Seventy wore the TYR Rise suit, added .44 onto her prelim time and qualified fourth. Actually, when Jackson was on the blocks in the TYR suit, my teammate Sean Mahoney and I were very excited about what was happening, "Bro this is a crazy experiment. If she goes slow in this 50, it'll be huge for Blue Seventy," Sean said to me. Of course, I wholeheartedly agreed. It came to no surprise to me that the next night Jackson donned the Blue Seventy suit instead of the TYR. And speaking of finals, Dara Torres continued to amaze, joining Garrett Weber-Gale on the men's side as a double winner in the sprint freestyle events. Torres again set the American record with a time of 24.25, making it the ninth time she has broken the American record in the event. Jessica Hardy kept her second place trend going, receiving the silver, touching at 24.82. Jackson, who may have been too excited in prelims, finished third with a 24.88. In the prelims of the men's 1500, it was Club Wolverine's Eric Vendt who set the pace, and the US Trials record, going a 14:50.24. Chad La Tourette, last years California State Champion in the 500 freestyle, qualified second with a 15:02.78. American record holder and Athens silver medalist Larsen Jensen was very relaxed in the morning, swimming a 15:11.99, adding around 25 seconds to his best time. In finals, it was Jensen out like a shot, dominating the field up until the 1200-meter mark, where Peter Vanderkaay, who qualified third, zoomed past and stayed in first for good. Vanderkaay finished with a 14:45.54, barley missing Jensen's American record of 14:45.29. Jensen took second with a 14:50.80 and La Tourette was third with a 14:57.50. Vendt, who definitely went too fast in prelims, took third with a 15:07.78, adding seventeen seconds to his prelim swim. On Saturday night came the final of the men's 100-meter butterfly. It was another battle between the great Michael Phelps and the world record holder Ian Crocker. As always, Crocker was out first, splitting a 23.93 to Phelps' 24.41. But as usual, Phelps the distance swimmer had more in the tank by the end and ended up out splitting Crocker 26.48 to 27.69. Phelps won convincingly with a time of 50.89 and Crocker touched second in 52.62. Gil Stovall, who is on the Olympic Team in the 200 butterfly, finished third in 52.08. In the final of the women's 200 backstroke, it was once again heartbreak for Texas swimmer Hayley McGregor. After breaking the world record in prelims of the 100 backstroke, she eventually placed third, losing her spot to a late charging Margaret Hoelzer. In the 200, Hoelzer won in a world record time of 2:06.09, but it was not her who ended McGregor's Olympic dream. Rather, it was fifteen-year-old Elizabeth Beisel (2:06.92), whose last lap domination of McGregor (2:07.69) was the key. My heart goes out to McGregor, who now has four Olympic Trials third places under her belt. Something like that just doesn't happen, it was meant to be, and I hope she is able to move on from something that horrible. Of course, I saved the best for last, the final of the men's 50 freestyle. The heat had everything a swim fan could ask for: Two Olympic Gold medalists, a few

NCAA champions, two defending world champions, and countless NCAA All-American honors. This was easily the fastest 50 freestyle field in Olympic Trial history. To put things in perspective, the top eight times in finals of the '04 Olympics were 21.93 (the time that Gary Hall Jr. posted to win), 21.94, 22.02, 22.08, 22.11, 22.18, 22.26, and 22.37. At this year's trials, Garrett Weber-Gale, who won and set the American record, went a 21.47. Second was Ben Wildman-Tobriner with a 21.65, third was Cullen Jones (21.81), fourth was Gary Hall Jr. (21.91), fifth was Jason Lezak (21.98), sixth was Nathan Adrian (22.07), and tied for seventh was Nick Brunelli and Bryan Lundquist at 22.13. The top four swimmers at this year's trials could've won the Olympic Gold in Athens. Fifth place at Trials was good enough for bronze at the Games, and the last three guys would've placed at least sixth. By far the fastest 50 freestyle in United States history. Also, with Ben Wildman-Tobriner of Lick Wilmerding High School making the team in the 50, the NCS has a chance to earn its second Olympic gold medal in that event, the first being Matt Biondi in 1988. By coincidence, they are also the last two men to hold the 50 free record at NCS. So that's it for Trials. The best meet I have ever attended, including the Trials in 2004.

I hope you enjoyed my blogs.
-Matt

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