

NATIONAL PRESS CLUB HEADLINERS LUNCHEON WITH OLYMPIAN KATIE LEDECKY

SUBJECT: LIFE AS A STUDENT AND AS AN OLYMPIC SWIMMER

MODERATOR: ANDREA EDNEY, PRESIDENT OF THE NATIONAL PRESS CLUB

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ANDREA EDNEY: Good afternoon. Welcome to the National Press Club, the world's leading professional organization for journalists. My name is Andrea Edney. I'm the 11th President of the National Press Club, and I'm an editor at Bloomberg News. We are so pleased to welcome everyone to this Headliner's Luncheon with five time Olympic gold medalist, Katie Ledecky. (Applause)

For our viewers and listeners on C-SPAN, public radio and on our live stream, please feel free to also follow the program along on Twitter using the hashtag #Pressclubdc. Sitting at the head table, and please hold your applause until all have been introduced, I'm going to start from this end, right over here. When I say your name, please stand up. We have Shuan Butcher, Communications Manager of Disabled Sports USA; We have Jamaal Abdul-Alim, Education Editor at the Conversation US; we have Michael Ledecky, Katie's brother; we have Nathan Scott, Senior Editor, SB Nation; we have Ted Leonsis, Owner and CEO of Monumental Sports and Entertainment; we have Michael Fletcher, Senior Writer at ESPN's The Undeclared; we have Mary Gen Ledecky, Katie's mom.

I'm going to come in from this end. We have Robert S. Weiner, President of Weiner Public News and the National Press Club member who organized today's luncheon; we have Mike Hempen, Supervisor, Editor and Reporter at The Associated Press; we have Claire McNear, staff writer at The Ringer; we have David Ledecky, Katie's dad; we have Nancy Chen, anchor at WJAL TV; we have Gene Wang, sports reporter at the *Washington Post*; and we have Lori Russo, President of Stanton Communications and a member of the NPC Headliners Team. (Applause)

So, today's special guest was born just up the beltway, in Bethesda, Maryland, with pool water in her blood. Her mom, who's here with us today, was a top 20 rated collegiate swimmer in the 200 yard freestyle (Applause); her older brother, Michael, also here today; there, you saw him, was a comprehensive swimmer in high school becoming a top 10 finisher in the 100 yard freestyle at the National Catholic High School championships. Pretty good. So this is a swimming family.

The day Katie turned 21, which was just two weeks ago, she didn't do what many of us did when we reached that milestone. Instead, she competed in, and won, the 1650 meter freestyle at the 2018 NCAA championship. Congratulations, Katie. (Applause) And what she did after that, who knows? We wish her a belated happy birthday. She will, at the end of this luncheon, receive a coveted National Press Club mug to put among her medals. She can use that however she'd like.

She has set world records in pools on three continents and juggled a class schedule as a Stanford University sophomore with an interest in psychology and political science. Katie attributes her rapid rise and dominance in swimming to a relentless focus on setting goals and then work, work, working to make them real. One way she pushes herself is to practice with male swimmers, who are often left in her wake. She is now preparing for the 2020 Tokyo Summer Olympics among great expectations that she will take gold, no pressure. It will be her third Olympiad with her prior outings in 2012 in London and 2016 in Rio de Janeiro. She's taken time from that preparation to discuss the life of a competitive swimmer at the top of her sport. Please join me in welcome to the National Press Club one of the best female swimmers in the history of the sport, Olympic champion Katie Ledecky. (Applause)

KATIE LEDECKY: Thanks, Andrea. I'd first like to thank everyone for being here. It's such an honor to be at the National Press Club and to be home for my spring break and to be able to be here. And I'd like to thank Andrea again, and Bob, for organizing this event and for everyone who helped organize this event.

I actually have a fairly big announcement to make right from the start. I wanted to do this here in my hometown because there are so many people here that I really care about and who have helped me get to this point. I'm announcing that I am becoming a professional swimmer. I am foregoing the remaining two years of my collegiate eligibility and will be focusing on my training and accepting professional endorsements and sponsorships, and I'm really looking forward to these next couple years and leading up to 2020 and hopefully putting myself in the best position to compete well in 2020.

Again, as I said, it's really special to make this announcement here at home because I was able to do it in front of a lot of people I really care about. Obviously, my family who's supported me throughout my swimming career, a number of my teachers and friends at Stone Ridge School of the Sacred Heart, Connie and Malcolm. And the Leonsis family, Ted and Zach are here today. Ted, I think you introduced me to my first professional athletes when I was about two or three years old going to NHL hockey games cheering on the Caps. It's such an honor and privilege to have you here as I make this announcement because you two have meant so much to our family and it's been really nice to have your continued support.

So I want to thank you, I'd like to thank, again, all of my teammates and professors and teachers over the years at Stone Ridge, at Little Flower School, and of course at Stanford right now, my coach Greg Meehan, has been very supportive of this decision. I've had two incredible collegiate years, winning two national championships with my teammates and just so happy that I've had that experience. And now I'm going to be making this transition and I'm really excited about the future and I'm looking forward to discussing it and answering some of your questions, and questions about this and hopefully telling some great stories over the last couple of years that I've accumulated from competing internationally and all the stories that I have from growing up here in this area.

Started swimming when I was six years old for a summer league swim team in this area and never looked back from there. Committed myself to staying on a black line every day and putting in that hard training that had lead me to the Olympics and World Championships and to where I am today. So it's, again, a true honor to be here at the National Press Club with all this great history and to be here in this great forum.

ANDREA EDNEY: Well, Katie, we are so happy to have you here with us. Thank you for being here with us today. Wow, that's a really big step. Tell us a little bit about how you came to that decision, and why now?

KATIE LEDECKY: So it's a decision that I didn't make just this last week. It's something that over the last few months I've been discussing and took a lot of feedback from my coach at Stanford, Greg Meehan. And he really recommended this time to make the announcement and to turn professional. It's something I could have done in two years once I completed my eligibility, but this gives me some time before 2020 to really focus in on getting all the pieces in place so that I can really train hard and focus on my training leading up to 2020.

And again, it's something that I'm really excited about and I'm going to be continuing to train and go to school at Stanford and just continue to keep my focus where it's always been, which is on my studies and my swimming and what matters to me. I get to do it around some really great people.

ANDREA EDNEY: That's really great. So tell us a little bit about your training regimen. Tell us a little bit about it?

KATIE LEDECKY: Yeah, so I train in the water about ten times a week. And then on top of that, I do some dry land and weight training. And at Stanford, I usually have morning practice from about 6:15 to 8:00 and then get some breakfast. Go to class usually around 9:30, have a couple of classes depending on what day it is and then I come back in the afternoon to train, do some dry land training and then another two hours or so in the water. So it's a lot. I usually try to sneak in a nap during the day or something like that.

I always have to focus on my studies and getting my work done for school. I do that in the evening before I go to bed. Get to bed early so I can wake up early in the morning and continue to train.

ANDREA EDNEY: So what are you focusing on in your studies at Stanford? What kind of classes are you taking?

KATIE LEDECKY: So I'm in the process of declaring psychology. At Stanford, you declare by the end of your sophomore year so I'm starting to do that. Have chosen an advisor and starting to lay out my class schedule and plans for the next couple years. I'm really interested in psychology and political science. As you said, I might minor in political science. There are some really topnotch professors at Stanford that I've gotten to meet even over the first two years of my time there in a whole number of fields.

I haven't limited myself to just psychology or political science classes. I've really tried to expand my reach in terms of what I'm learning and studying and that's been such a great experience. I get to do that with the top professors in their fields and all of the students and classmates of mine that are either interested in that field or have other really interesting things that they're passionate about. And I get to connect with them on a daily basis in class, at the pool, in my dorm.

Last year when I first got to Stanford, they don't tell you who your roommates are until move-in day at Stanford. And I walked into my dorm room and I had three roommates, people I had never met before, and I was just coming off of the Olympics and so that's kind of maybe a little shocking, or something new, that these three roommates have to kind of learn about. They didn't really know much about swimming, but they had kind of known me from the Olympics or had seen me compete a little bit.

But it was really fun to just be around three people that didn't think of me as Katie the swimmer. They really just engaged with me as a student and as a fellow classmate. And I really enjoyed that experience and have had many of those experiences at Stanford. At my time through high school at Stone Ridge, just being treated like another student at school. And that's something that's really fostered my growth as a student, being able to focus on my studies just as much, or more, than my swimming.

ANDREA EDNEY: That's great. You've taken courses in international relations and the Olympics play a major role in sports diplomacy. What have you experienced in that theme as an athlete?

KATIE LEDECKY: I think when I walked into the Olympic Village in 2016 at my second Olympics, I had this moment where I thought to myself, "Wow, I forgot how cool this was." Just not experienced it for four years, but I remembered how cool it was in London. And just being back immersed in that atmosphere where you're walking around, living in these apartment-style dorms with other Teen USA teammates, but then you're in buildings right next to every other country in the world. And you're eating in the cafeteria with every other athlete that's competing at the Olympics.

And it has such potential and I think it has shown how countries can come together for those moments and those weeks. And we just saw it a little bit in Pyeongchang, the moments that they had there. But I think it's a really special platform for the world to come together a little bit. And hopefully it's not just for those few weeks at a time, but it really is just neat as an athlete to have those opportunities to interact with athletes from other countries and foster some of those relationships.

One day I walked into the cafeteria in Rio and you give your bag to somebody in the lobby of the cafeteria to hold onto your bag before you go into the main part of the cafeteria. And a girl walked up to me and said, "You're Katie, right?" And I said, "Yeah." And she was a Swiss athlete, a golfer, who was going to be entering her freshman year at Stanford. And it was just this amazing moment where I all of a sudden met somebody from another country that was also competing in the Olympics that I knew I would continue to interact with and continue to maintain a friendship with during my time at Stanford.

So it's really just a week or two that you see, but it's many, many days, many years of training to get to that point, first off. And then it's something that has the potential to be a long-lasting experience. And now I'm a part of this Olympic family where all these Olympians, whether it's from Team USA-- we have such a great history of performance at the Olympics and I've had the opportunity to meet some swimmers and Olympians who've competed in past Olympics, which has been a tremendous honor and a lot of fun to connect with them and tell stories and share some similarities from our experiences and compare the differences. And that's been really neat.

But then also just to continue to be a part of that family and to meet those people. And hopefully, I'll have the opportunity to experience that again in Tokyo and I'll have another one of those moments where I say to myself, "Wow, I forgot how cool this was," because it's an experience like no other. I would encourage any of you, if you ever have the opportunity to go to an Olympics, whether it's to compete-- I know there are some young swimmers here-- whether it's to compete or to watch, to really take the opportunity because I know my family also has some stories of times where they've had the opportunity to meet athletes or families from other countries, or spectators and just kind of to experience a different culture has been a really nice opportunity for my family to kind of travel the world through swimming.

ANDREA EDNEY: That's really cool. Let me ask you-- I have a couple more Stanford-focused questions here-- when you graduate, now you just told us you're declaring a major. So have you given any thought as to how you would like to use that major? What would you like to be? What sort of-- what would you like to do besides swimming when you graduate?

KATIE LEDECKY: I don't know for sure. I think that's what college is for, to really discover what you want to do beyond college. But, I think for the present moment, just with this decision that I'm making now, obviously that will give me a few new opportunities and I really do want to connect my interests in the classroom and my swimming and try to

get out and do some good in this world in some way. And I think helping others has always been really important to me. I really experienced that through high school. At Stone Ridge, we had a social action program where every other Wednesday we would not have any classes and we would go out in the community and help others. I worked at a place called Bikes for the World for a couple of years where they collect bikes and fix them up so that they can send them to developing countries to use and to fix up. And it creates jobs and it provides them a way of transportation or getting to school. So I did that.

I visited some schools and spoke at some schools, visited some hospitals. So, I really see myself, hopefully, continuing to have the opportunity to help others in any way and I think that's something I'm going to continue for my whole life. I don't know if there's a job or something connected to that in the future, but whether it's a job or a side thing that I do, it's always going to be trying to help others and my community.

ANDREA EDNEY: That's great. We do have a question here about your charity and the charities that you support. And that is how did you decide to choose the charities you support? We have here Catholic Charities, Shepherd's Table, Bikes for the World, which you just mentioned, Wounded Warriors. Have events of the past few years and what you've learned at Stanford lead you to drop or add to this list?

KATIE LEDECKY: You know, I've never really thought of it as a list of something where I'm picking certain charities over others that I'm supporting. But really, I've received a lot of nice opportunities over the past six years, I guess it is now, to really help others like I have. And a number of those things, as you mentioned, are connected through my school and some of them I even would go to and work out with my classmates, Shepherd's Table and Bikes for the World.

But those are all places that really mean a lot to me and I really see are doing great things in our community and in our world. Again, any time I can reach out and try to help people, it means a lot to me and hopefully it does do a lot of good. I've visited Children's Hospital a number of times, and I'm always amazed at the power of a gold medal and just how kids' eyes light up when they see it and then get to touch it and then get to try it on. It really can make a difference and if it just means they're a little bit happier that one day, then I think that's a positive impact.

If I can make even a bigger impact, a bigger positive impact, over a period of time over these next couple of years, hopefully throughout my life, that's going to mean a lot to me and it's something that I'm excited to do because there are so many areas in our world that need help. So many people that need help or need a little bit of encouragement. And if I can provide that encouragement or provide that help, provide that smile, then that's something I want to be doing.

ANDREA EDNEY: That's great, that's laudable. Good, we need more people like you in the world. What do you miss most about home while you are at Stanford?

KATIE LEDECKY: You know, you guys are going to laugh because you're all from here. But I think I miss a little bit of the busyness, the traffic. (Laughter) No. You know, I think you get that just from being on any college campus. You kind of are in a bubble a little bit where you're going about your daily activities; swimming, training, going to classes, being with your friends. And I love that, I love the monotony, almost, of training and of doing the things that I love.

But I do miss the D.C. area and the different events and the different people. As I said, there are so many people that have helped me along the way, and to be a little bit further away from them is sometimes hard. But, I do have a good community out at Stanford that's supporting me and helping me along as well.

ANDREA EDNEY: In the scheme of things, how important do you think is club swimming? What do you say to kids who are on those summer teams?

KATIE LEDECKY: Yeah. I would tell-- I think there are some club swimmers in the world. And I'd tell you to keep pushing the boundaries. And I do want to recognize my club swim team here in this area, Nation's Capital Swim Club. Tom Ugast is here from the team. And they've been exceptionally supportive of me through the years. Just received really great coaching and training, my Coach Bruce Gemmell through high school and then another year before I headed out to Stanford. And just a really great team to be a part of and met some really great teammates and friends that I'll have for the rest of my life.

I started swimming when I was six years old for a summer league swim team just to start, the Palisades Porpoises, and I followed my brother there. We just wanted to meet as many friends as we could that first summer. And the best way to do that is to sign up for the swim team. And you get to meet 100 people aged 6 to 18. And automatically, I had a hundred friends to play with at the pool.

And after that first summer, my brother and I realized how much we loved swimming. And I continued to play other sports growing up. I played basketball and I played soccer. I did some Irish dancing, I played the piano. I was just involved in as many things as I could do at an early age. But I did find that as I got older, I would pick swim practice over basketball practice or soccer practice. And eventually realized that I really liked this sport and I really wanted to give it my all and put every bit of energy that I could into it.

And so I just set some really big goals and started working at them. And eventually, I had qualified for Olympic trials and after that, I made it my goal to make the Olympic team. And I always try to set goals that seem farfetched when I say them out loud, say them to my coach or write them down. And they just look nearly impossible when I write them down. But that's what motivates me every day to go to the pool and to continue training and continue to stay focused on what I'm doing. And it's so satisfying and rewarding when you start chipping away at those goals and meeting those goals.

In 2013, I sat down with my coach at the time, Bruce Gemmell, and we set a few goals for through 2016. And the goals were to go 3:56 or faster in the 400 free, the current--

my current best time at the time was 3:59. And that's the fastest anybody's been, and the goal was to go 3:56. To go 8:05 or faster in the 800 free. I'm pretty sure my time at the time was 8:11 or 8:13. Nobody would even imagine going 8:05 or even imagine that that's possible. But we said it and we said it out loud and we just shared that between the two of us, that that was the goal.

And the third goal, which I think we set a year later, was to win the 200 freestyle at the Olympics. And I, at that point, had never competed in an individual 200 freestyle at an international meet. So, those three goals were pretty far out there, but I tried to chip away at those every year and set those goals and really commit to the training that was necessary to achieve those goals.

And I did it. I achieved those three goals on-- pretty much on the nose at the Rio Olympics. (Applause) That's just an example of one thing that I've learned through swimming, which is to not be afraid to set some big goals. And that's why-- I guess that's a longwinded way of answering the question of why I think club swimming and summer league swimming is so important. But it really is true that swimming can teach you a lot and not just more about swimming or learning goals, but that lesson can be applied to so many different things.

It can be applied to setting goals for school, for another sport or for business or for whatever field you're working in or whatever you're passionate about. And I don't think I would have learned that any other way except through swimming. And I feel very fortunate that I've learned that lesson from an early age. I'm 21 years old and I have, hopefully, many more years ahead of me in the sport. But then obviously beyond that to hopefully make a difference. And learning that lesson from such an early age, how to set goals, how to work hard and be in an environment where you have to push yourself and train hard and work hard and be around the right people at the right times, those lessons will last forever.

ANDREA EDNEY: Can you talk to us a little bit, since we're talking about setting goals and attaining them, can you talk to us a little bit about your motivation? Are there days that you need to push yourself to stay motivated? How do you keep pushing?

KATIE LEDECKY: For the most part, I don't have too much trouble with motivating myself just given the fact that I do set some goals for myself that are motivating on their own. But I think, again, just being around the right people and having coaches over the years that have really aligned with my passion for the sport and my passion to get better and to improve as a swimmer, as a student, as a person and just having those people around me and teammates that push me as well, you mention training with some really great swimmers. I've trained with the very best over the years, both at Nation's Capital Swim Club and at Stanford. We just won the national championship at Stanford in a dominating performance. It was amazing to watch what my teammates did. We won all five relays and won a whole number of individual events.

And it was so much fun to be a part of because I knew how much hard work all my teammates had put in and what we had worked towards together. We helped motivate each

other to get to that point. So having teammates that motivate you is very helpful and I think a lot of people think of swimming as an individual sport, but it really can be a team sport. That's something I got to experience at the collegiate level. And that's why I wanted to go to college in the first place and swim for Stanford, because I got to experience that. And I really feel like I got to take full advantage of that and really have that full experience of being a part of a special team, being a part of something where we were working towards a common goal and doing it together.

And I got to make so many great friends. All my best friends are on that swim team and I'll continue to have them supporting me, and I'll continue to support them as I make this transition.

ANDREA EDNEY: Thank you. How do you measure improvement when you're often so much better than anyone else in your field? (Laughter)

KATIE LEDECKY: Well, we have a scoreboard and so there's a time that goes up on the board at the end of your race, which is you don't get that in another sport like figure skating or diving where judges have to tell you how you're doing. But swimming is very time-based, which honestly-- it does get harder for me as I get older-- as I have gone through this sport and have broken world records and gotten faster. And now every time I get up on the blocks, I'm racing the current world record holder in that event because I'm racing myself and my times and I'm always trying to get better.

So it's challenging and that's what's fun about it. I get to really push myself to the absolute max and that's why these next couple years are really exciting for me, because I get to see what's possible.

ANDREA EDNEY: Do you listen to music when you train? If yes, what's on your play list?

KATIE LEDECKY: There aren't really very good headphones or anything developed yet where you can wear it while you're training. But we usually do have speakers outside the pool so when we touch the wall and have some time on the wall, which if you're going on fast intervals, you might not get that much time on the wall. But our coach at Stanford usually puts on a Pandora play list so it could range from '60s, '70s music to current music or whatever our coach is feeling that day. Wednesday mornings are usually country and there's always debate over country music and whether people like it or not.

The coaches all debate about whether they like country music or not, and we always chime in. So about half the team likes it, half the team doesn't. But, we have that one morning, is country.

ANDREA EDNEY: What are your thoughts on athletes using sports as a platform for social change?

KATIE LEDECKY: You know, I have kind of said that already. I think any time there's the chance to create positive change, it's great. And I think athletes do have the opportunity to do a lot of good in this world and we had that platform, we have that ability. As I said, the Olympics are really special in that they bring the world together in a way. You know, why can't we all just get along? It's got to be there, and I hope that I can be a voice for people and really just try to continue to do what I'm doing to hopefully inspire young kids to pursue their goals, pursue their dreams and to do some good in this world.

ANDREA EDNEY: I have a couple of NCAA questions here for you. Who pushed you competitively in the NCAA?

KATIE LEDECKY: There are a lot of great teams in the NCAA and a lot of Olympians that have competed in the NCAA and it was by no means given that Stanford was going to win NAAs this year. We had to work for it. And we have great competition, even within our conference with Cal being right across the bay from us and having a dual meet with them and swimming against them at Pac 12s. And they were second at NCAA, so we really do have good competition. And Stanford has a really great history of women's swimming and we wanted to uphold that history.

And last year at the NAAs in 2017, that was our first national championship since 1998. So, it took a while for us to get to that point, and we were so happy to do that and then we wanted to do it again. And we were able to do that this year through a lot of hard work, but knowing that it took some time for us to get there and that it wasn't going to be handed to us and we had to fight for it and that's what we did. And we just got into a really great rhythm in the NCAA meet and ran away with it.

ANDREA EDNEY: So, if you could, how would you reform the NCAA and the IOC to benefit student athletes?

KATIE LEDECKY: Oh, that's a loaded question. And, you know, that's something I haven't been able to put too much thought into. And I don't think I'm necessarily going to be the one that's able to make any impact in those areas. But, I think becoming a professional athlete now, I'll kind of pay a little more attention to what our governing bodies are doing, what FINA is doing, what the IOC is doing, USOC and try to get involved in small ways if I can and make sure athletes' voices are being heard and raise any issues that I may see over the years.

But I don't know if I'm going to be the one, and I don't think it's going to take one person to make any big changes. I don't know if there are any big changes that need to be made. But, I'm just excited for the opportunities that I'll potentially have to compete at the Olympics, to compete on the international stage. And I'm very fortunate to have had the opportunities I've had to compete in the NCAA.

And that's something I've really been thoughtful about and happy with because I do know the history of the NCAA and my mom was one of the first women, I think, to benefit from Title IX and being able to compete collegiately. And I've met a few swimmers and

Olympians who competed in the 1960s that didn't have the opportunity that I did, that actually had to retire at age 15 or 16 after competing in the Olympics because there was no college swimming.

So I think it's something that I've really been thinking about over these last two years, how grateful I am to have that opportunity. And I think all female athletes that are competing collegiately should be really grateful to have that opportunity and continue to be grateful for that and continue to look for that really great positive and see how we can push the boundaries even further and just-- there are some really great female athletes in the NCAA and I've been able to meet them over these past two years and train with them and compete with them. And I think we should all be really grateful and happy that Title IX came around and we had that opportunity.

ANDREA EDNEY: Do you have a role model inside or outside of the sport?

KATIE LEDECKY: I've had a number over the years. My biggest role model, though, is my brother. (Applause) He's always been there for me, always working hard. He's the one that I followed into swimming and-- yeah, he's always been so supportive of me and just seeing how hard he worked in school and in swimming when we were just little kids going to Little Flower and going to school and just growing up together. It's just so many great memories. Thanks, Michael. (Applause)

ANDREA EDNEY: Speaking of family, are you related to the Czech skier with the similar last name who won gold medals in Korea?

KATIE LEDECKY: Right, Ester Ledeka. We might be related to their family. We are kind of trying to figure that out. Her father is a famous Czech musician and my grandfather was from the Czech Republic, and he would always say that he would always bring CDs home and tell my dad and his brother that we were related to this musician. So there's a strong chance that we might be somewhat related. It's not a close relationship, we're not first cousins or anything. We might be fourth or fifth cousins, but there aren't too many Ledeckys in the world, so who knows? At least we're part of the Olympic family together now.

ANDREA EDNEY: That's right. So moving from central Europe a little farther east, can you describe your interaction with Russian athletes? Have they been friendly and what are your thoughts on the doping scandal?

KATIE LEDECKY: So, I haven't really had much interaction with Russian swimmers, in particular. There aren't too many distance swimmers from Russia. But I do compete against some Russian swimmers every once in a while and I competed in Kazan, Russia, for the 2015 world championships and I had a great experience in Kazan. My family had a great experience visiting Russia, visiting Moscow and Kazan.

In terms of the doping, it's very frustrating as an athlete to see the widespread doping, whether it's certain individuals or certain countries as a whole. And I'm hopeful that there

will continue to be some changes and continue to be strong testing in every country throughout the world, not just in certain countries and that WADA and IOC and everyone can really crack down on the doping so that when we get to compete that we know that we're competing against clean athletes.

ANDREA EDNEY: Good. Should there be government stipends, do you think, to aid Olympic athletes with living and training expenses? If not, what do you see as the strengths of the current financing system of private donations and athletes working day jobs?

KATIE LEDECKY: You know, I don't know too much about government and what it does with athletes. I don't think the USOC receives any funding from the U.S. government as far as I know. But I think there's certainly some different things that might change over the years and those are things I would become well educated on and have some more thoughts on in the future. But for right now, I'm not too up to speed on all those things and what's best and what's not.

ANDREA EDNEY: Which Olympics did you enjoy the most?

KATIE LEDECKY: Oh, can I say a tie? I think the one in London, it was my first international experience competing internationally and so that's something I'll never forget and something that I just took in every single moment and just was in awe of the swimmers that I got to be around for the first time, these international swimmers and these people that I always got to watch on TV at the Olympics. And then to be there was the most surreal experience I could ever have.

But then in Rio, I also got to compete in more than just one event and really just kind of got to be immersed in the swimming competition and getting to race and get up on the blocks and compete for my country. And in London, I was so grateful to have that one opportunity, that one event and I made the most of it by winning gold, but I got to make the most of it more times than just one in Rio and really just enjoyed the whole experience both times.

And just couldn't have had more fun and both cities were incredible and put on great Olympics. The people in both London and Rio were so nice, so kind, so welcoming and that is something that I've really, really enjoyed and recognized these Olympic cities really do put on a good show when they get to host.

ANDREA EDNEY: How do you avoid injury?

KATIE LEDECKY: Yeah. Being careful and really that's something that-- it's something that I'll continue to do, just take measures, do different exercises that will help prevent injuries moving forward. But it's also something that I have to thank my coaches when I was younger for, for really helping me progress naturally as an athlete, not forcing really hard training on me when I was really young. Not having me swim ten times a week when I was eight years old, or something like that. They really helped me so that it was a

natural progression. That maybe I was swimming five times a week at age 10 and then six times a week at age 11 and so on as I moved up.

And so by the time I was at the Olympic level, or the collegiate level, that I still had room to improve and still had a good, solid body that wasn't injured or have anything to really distract me or pull me away from the sport.

The only injury I've had up until today is I broke my arm in 4th grade playing basketball in gym class. I was maybe a little too competitive in gym class and ran for the ball and I fell and somebody fell on top of me and I broke my arm.

ANDREA EDNEY: Sounds like somebody else broke your arm.

KATIE LEDECKY: Yeah. So, I've been very lucky that I haven't had any injuries from swimming, whether it's a shoulder injury or knee injury, hip injury, foot, whatever it is. And that's something that I owe a lot to my coaches for really not pushing me too hard when I was younger, and also helping me learn the preventative exercises and the right strokes, the right technique. In swimming, I think learning the right technique at a young age was crucial for me for both preventing injuries and also, I guess, the speed that I have, just learning how to swim the strokes the proper way.

ANDREA EDNEY: Speaking of great coaches, what do you think are the main characteristics of a great coach, or-- this is a two-part question-- great parent of an athlete?

KATIE LEDECKY: Yeah. I think I have a lot of insight on that question because I do feel like I have had the best coaches and the best parents. (Applause) Yeah. In terms of coaching, it's a number of the things that I've already said. It's about helping the athlete make and write goals, or come up with goals that are going to push you and motivate you every day when you go to practice. And it's about helping them so that they progress naturally, as I just said. Not pushing too hard from a young age. That goes for both parents and coaches. Letting it be a natural thing.

As I said, I played a number of sports when I was younger and had a number of interests. But it was me, I was the one that made the decision that I was going to pick swim practice over basketball practice. It wasn't my parents or my coaches telling me that I had to go to this practice instead of this practice. It was something that I found. It was something that I had developed the passion for. And I think any parents out there who are here or watching, and any coaches, I think just letting the athletes do what they want to do, especially from a young age in terms of what they're passionate about.

If it's that they're really into something at school that they want to pursue further, encourage them and help them find the resources to pursue that further. If it's swimming and they want to make the Olympics and they have that as a goal for a few years into the future, encourage them and try to help them along the way and in any way that you can.

But for me and my family and my coaches, it's always something that I think came from me as an athlete. You know, asking my parents for advice on certain things, or asking my brother for advice on certain things. Or, watching and observing things that worked or didn't work among my peers, my classmates, my teammates.

And again, for the coaches to be smart about how you're developing your athletes over time and how you're encouraging them to set those goals. And not being afraid to set those big goals, but also being realistic and being thoughtful about how you're setting those goals and not just setting a goal, but also setting a plan for how to reach that goal. Those are the couple things that I've noticed and have worked for me and I hope will continue to work for me. I'm going to continue to do all those things, I'm going to continue to pursue my passion for swimming and for school and for other things as well as I develop those passions.

But it's also something that I think I've observed in other athletes and other students, what's worked and what hasn't worked and can continue to learn from them as well. So I encourage all young kids, all young athletes, to develop those passions, whatever they may be, and look for good people around you to support you. Your family, your friends, your coaches. You can always count on them to lend a voice, to lend a hand. And with that good support, you can achieve some pretty good things.

ANDREA EDNEY: What goals have you set for yourself going into the next Olympics?

KATIE LEDECKY: So I'm going to keep my swimming goals to myself in terms of times or places. But the one goal that I will share is that I do hope to compete in 2020 in Tokyo and I have some goals along the way to achieve that goal. And hopefully that means competing internationally a couple of times before Tokyo. And just really wanting to represent my country again at that biggest stage. As I said, it's a stage like no other and especially for a swimmer, that's our biggest stage. And to be able to get to that point a third time would be a great achievement.

If I can, first of all, make it there, qualify for the Olympics, that would be such an honor. Just doing that will make me really happy and proud that I get to represent my country that many times on the biggest stage. But then beyond that, if I can do a few more things that I'll keep to myself, I think I'll be really happy and really excited and really proud.

ANDREA EDNEY: What are your thoughts about possibly racing the 400 individual medley at nationals for the first time this summer? If you do race it at nationals, do you also want to race it at the 2019 Worlds?

KATIE LEDECKY: Getting into some specifics here. You know, I have competed in individual medley races at the collegiate level and at some smaller national meets. And I think I'll continue to compete in them and train IM because it's good for my freestyle. But I don't think long term and who knows, maybe I'll change my mind and pursue it a little further. But I have my hands full with the freestyle events. I have big things I want to achieve

there. So, anything that I'm doing in IM is really just to support those freestyle goals right now.

ANDREA EDNEY: You have what is called a gallop stroke. Can you explain what this is and how it became your stroke?

KATIE LEDECKY: Really getting into some specifics and some technical things. So, I have, I guess, this gallop stroke where I kind of go up and down-- or it might look like I'm going up and down in the water a little bit. I only breathe to one side on my freestyle so I really get into a really good rhythm with my stroke. I don't breathe to the other side. And that's something I've developed over the years. In London, I actually still breathed to both sides in my race, but after the prelims race, my coaches said, "Oh no, you should try not to breathe to that other side as much." We were still learning at the Olympics, geez. Who knows what I could have done if I did that at Olympic trials? Maybe I would have qualified at more events.

But, I have one side that I'm faster at with my breathing, so I've stuck with that over the past couple years.

ANDREA EDNEY: I do actually have a question here specifically about your breathing. (Laughter)

KATIE LEDECKY: Lot of people are curious about my breathing.

ANDREA EDNEY: So, I'm curious about your thoughts on the bilateral breathing debate and whether or not that matters at all in training to keep balance?

KATIE LEDECKY: Yeah, so bilateral breathing is when you breathe to both sides. So, I breathe to one side and when you're younger, it's better to breathe to both sides. All the young swimmers out there, breathe to both sides. It just helps create balance with your stroke and again, will prevent future injuries and just create a better stroke, probably, for you if you start that from a young age.

But then if you find that you're faster breathing to one of those sides, you got to try it out a couple years, breathe to both sides. And then once you find which side you're better at breathing to, you breathe to that side.

ANDREA EDNEY: That's good advice. What other advice do you have for young swimmers?

KATIE LEDECKY: Have fun. You know, I don't know if I've said that enough today. I, again, started swimming when I was six just for fun. And now I'm a professional swimmer and that's still all I'm doing. I'm just swimming for fun, really. There's a lot of external things that'll be thrown at me and there have been different competitions that I've had the opportunity to go to, like an Olympics or World Championships. But guess what?

Those are fun. You know, it's fun swimming fast, it's fun being with great teammates and getting to see these high level athletes also compete at the Olympics.

And you get a front row seat at the Olympics by competing there. So, that's fun for me. And it's really no different from the six year old that starts swimming for a summer league team and you get to cheer on your teammates and do a lot of goofy cheers and, you know, do a lot of fun things with your teammates. And you get to swim down and back across the pool as fast as you can. And that's all I'm trying to do, swim as fast as I can and cheer on my teammates and be a part of something special. Anything on top of that is bonus, really. Anything else that comes with that, anything, any impact that I can make, that's all bonus. Really what I'm doing is trying to have fun doing what I love.

ANDREA EDNEY: That's really wonderful. Do you have time for a social life?

KATIE LEDECKY: Yes. (Laughter) And as I've said, swimming is fun for me and through that, I've met some of my best friends. I'm rooming with five other swimmers on the team right now, and we support each other. We have fun together. Once we get back to the room after practice, we all sit around the common room and do our homework together. But there are a lot of laughs that are thrown in there along the way. We might watch a funny video or go out for dinner or go to a movie or something.

So I do have time for a social life, and I do have so many great opportunities at Stanford to meet so many different people, whether it's through Stanford athletics or the professors or other classmates of mine that are just doing some remarkable things. So I try to socialize with them as much as I can and get to know them and hopefully make some friendships that'll last the rest of my life.

ANDREA EDNEY: I'm sure you've made friendships that'll last the rest of your life. So, we have just a few minutes left. I'm going to ask you about two more questions. So, do you have a next step or is it just working to maintain the gold winning and excellence that you've attained so far?

KATIE LEDECKY: As I've said, I've set a number of goals for myself over the next couple years. And some of those goals are more short term over this next year, and then some of them are more long term for the next two years. And I know as a professional athlete now, I kind of also want to start thinking beyond that just in terms of what I want to be doing maybe in five years or ten years or 15 years down the road.

But right now, my focus is on my swimming and my school and what I'm doing in the classroom and the pool to really continue to do what I love and continue to pursue my goals, both in the classroom and in the pool.

ANDREA EDNEY: So last question. Now that you're going pro, what would your dream endorsement be?

KATIE LEDECKY: (Laughter) Ooh. You know, I don't think I should go into specifics on that. I think I need to talk to a few people before then and see what I can get set up. But that's I've said, and as I've talked to over the course of the day, I think I now have the opportunity to combine a lot of those things that I love and a lot of those things that I find fun. And I get to really pursue my passion now as a professional athlete of helping others, swimming fast, studying hard, really just trying to put together all the pieces that I really enjoy and I get to continue doing that around the people that I love and the people that have been really great friends of mine.

And I include a lot of you in that category. So again, just as a final note, I'd like to thank everyone here for supporting me and for everything you've done over the years. I'd also like to thank the National Press Club again for this tremendous opportunity and thanks to all the members of the media that are here for being here and for covering swimming and for covering my story over the last couple years. It's really been great to have you along for the ride to document those moments. These are memories that I hope I'll have for the rest of my life. But whenever I forget something, I know I can always look back to those stories or those videos that you all have created. So thanks for helping tell my story. (Applause)

ANDREA EDNEY: Katie, it is really our pleasure to have you here at the Club. We'd like to present to you with our National Press Club mug. Please use it in good health. Thank you for being here. (Applause)

Before we wrap up, I'd like to highlight a couple of upcoming events that we have. On April 4th, we have Sheila Tate with her biography of Nancy Reagan speaking at the club. Also, tomorrow night at 7:30, we have "Fifty Years of 60 Minutes" with executive producer Jeff Fager and with Bill Whitaker. And on April 26th, we'll have a Newsmaker event with Anthony Scaramucci. Everybody, thank you so much for being here today. (Applause)

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