

USA Hockey Media Conference

Monday, January 1 2018

Tony Granato

Josh Pauls

Dan Brennan

Meghan Duggan

Robb Stauber

Brian Gionta

Press Conference

DAVE FISCHER: I'm Dave Fischer from USA Hockey. On the sled side quick, we'll get a opening comment and we'll be happy to take your questions. Our general manager of the sled team is Dan Brennan. I think most of you know we won the last two gold medals. Dan, what are the preparations going to be like here coming in on the way to Pyeongchang.

DAN BRENNAN: We're awfully excited. We'll be in Chicago training as a team for the first time for an extended period of time. We don't normally get to do that.

We have a preliminary tournament in Italy. And then home and away with Canada, and then we're off to Pyeongchang. Really thrilled with the group we have and looking forward to playing for a gold medal.

DAVE FISCHER: Our team captain, Josh Pauls, is next to Dan. Josh, comment on what it will take to get three golds in a row.

JOSH PAULS: Like our former coach, Coach Sauer, used to say, it's really hard to get on top, and it's even harder to stay. It's going to take dedication from every one of our team members.

But we're definitely up to the challenge, especially living with each other and training together. It's going to take a full team mentality, and I think we have that going in.

DAVE FISCHER: Head coach of the Women's Team is Robb Stauber. Robb, the group has been together since September down in Wesley Chapel, Fla. And now you're down to the final team. What do things look



like moving forward?

ROBB STAUBER: Things look really good for our team. But we caution our players day in, day out that it's one game at a time. You don't go to the Olympics and just get to the gold medal game. That would be a mistake on our part.

We focus day in, day out as a group that's going to use each day to get better. And when we get to the Olympics we're going to take it one game at a time.

DAVE FISCHER: Captain of the Women's Team is Meghan Duggan. I think everyone knows this is the 20th anniversary of women's ice hockey in the Olympics. The U.S. won the first gold medal in '98, won seven of the last eight World Championships. But that elusive gold medal in the Olympics has avoided our country. Meghan, what are your thoughts on getting back to the top of the podium?

MEGHAN DUGGAN: We're excited. We're ready to go. It's been a fantastic couple of months for our team down in Florida. It's really been a fantastic process for us over the last three and a half, four years since the last Olympics.

Obviously after that, you know, we had to figure out what we were made of, what we wanted to accomplish over these last couple of years, and really put ourselves in a position to achieve the goal that we want to achieve as a program and as a team and as a country going into this next Olympics.

We're excited. We've got the right group. We've been training really hard. Looking forward to getting over there.

DAVE FISCHER: On the men's side, head coach Tony Granato, no stranger to international competition in the National Hockey League as well. Tony, I know you love the red, white and blue, an exciting day today. Your thoughts on the celebration here?

TONY GRANATO: It's a great day for hockey. Obviously from a selection process it's been a battle for us on all the players we have available to us. We're real happy with the players that we announced today. I think we've put together an outstanding group of

players that will represent us well come February and give us a great chance to do really well and compete for a medal.

DAVE FISCHER: Brian Gionta, that experience back in 2006, what will you bring to the group of players and how will that help you in guiding this team?

BRIAN GIONTA: I think a lot of it, with that experience, you try to get over there. The Olympics are an overwhelming event.

When you get over there, you have to absorb it; you've got to enjoy the process, but you've got to go over there with a goal, and that goal in mind is to come away with a gold medal. And I think that's keeping the focus on the guys, making sure that that stays the focus and not just the whole aura around the Olympics.

DAVE FISCHER: We're awfully excited at USA Hockey. More boys, girls, adults, disabled players playing the game than ever before. Leading the way is hockey and youth development. A lot of great things ahead.

Q. Gio, talk a little bit about the role of captain in the Olympics and how that is similar and how that's going to be different from the role of captain that you've been in for so long in the NHL?

BRIAN GIONTA: They're much different as far as the process. The team has to come together much quicker here. It's a shorter snippet of a season.

And so a lot of it is pre-stuff getting guys together as much as possible. The biggest challenge is getting the team to gel together as quick as possible.

You have four practices or so before we come together and start competing in the games. And so it's about gaining that chemistry with the guys early on that will carry us through towards the end.

You don't have the luxury of going throughout the season, the ups and downs of the season and finding out who people are, and you have to fast track that whole process.

Q. Tony, I saw only one goalie is on the men's roster right now. Can you kind of explain that and what the steps are going to be going forward?

TONY GRANATO: We named one goalie today, Ryan Zapski, the one goalie that's on the roster today. We'll name a couple in the next couple of weeks as we move forward. But it was a decision made that we would wait a little bit to name the last two goalies to our roster. We'll have two more named in the near future.

Q. There's been a lot said in the last couple of

weeks about Alex Carpenter and Megan Bozek not making the cut for the roster. Now that the roster is official, could you speak about that decision?

ROBB STAUBER: It's never easy to let veterans go. They're just a big part of the program; but at the end of the day, we have to go to South Korea with what we feel most comfortable with and that's a very difficult decision, just having conversations with those players and letting them know that this time around their dream isn't going to be likely. And on our end we've just got to focus and make sure we get the best team there, like I said take it day by day; we're not going to go to the Olympics and think we're just going to get to the gold medal game. We're taking it game by game, and we're going to be really good.

Q. Brian, you've represented the United States nearly at every level of hockey. How special is it for you once again to be able to put on the red, white and blue?

BRIAN GIONTA: It sends chills up my back as you say that. It literally, growing up, I think everyone can relate with the Olympics and the magnitude of the Olympics. The world stops to watch the Olympic games. And to be able to be at that level representing your country, it's a dream come true.

And I've been very fortunate throughout my career to be able to do that many times, but at no time does it lessen the effect of it. When you walk out of that tunnel with that jersey on, you still have that same feeling you had as a kid. And I'm loving the opportunity to be able to do it again, especially at my age. And you never know where you're going to be with your career and stuff like that.

And so to be able to do it at my age, I'm extremely excited about the prospect of going over there and winning gold.

Q. Brian, the Bills made the playoffs for the first time in 17 years. You're a western New York native. Did you see the game last night? Did you see the Bengals game? What's your reaction?

BRIAN GIONTA: I think it was much like everyone else's. Obviously being part of Pegula Sports and stuff like that, extremely proud of the Bills for what they've been able to do this year.

But being a western New Yorker, I grew up, I was watching the four Super Bowls they went to, and not a lot of kids in the area can relate to the Bills being in the playoffs. It's a great step forward for the community and a great step forward for the Bills. And hopefully they can continue that success.

Q. Tony, how do you prepare for your group,

specifically a Russian team, any idea how they put that team together given what the IOC decision is?

TONY GRANATO: Anytime you play a Russian team you know you expect high skill. You expect extremely talented players. So how they put it together and what they do in the next few weeks, we'll have to keep an eye on.

We're not going to do anything different as we get ready for the Olympics. Our job is to make sure that we're ready, getting our players ready to play no matter who we're going to play.

So all the competition at the Olympics is special in one way or another, and we'll look to get our team ready to be the best that we can be. And whatever Russian team shows up when we play them, we'll have to deal with it then.