

Sydney McLaughlin runs WORLD RECORD on final day of Trials

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Sydney McLaughlin crosses the line in a new 400m hurdles world record, 51.90. Photo by Jay Bendlin

By Caela Fenton

Sydney McLaughlin raced her way to a blazing fast 51.90 in the 400m hurdles in the U.S. Olympic Trials final, taking down Dalilah Muhammad’s world record of 52.16, with Muhammad herself in the race beside her.

McLaughlin and Muhammad are 1-2 on the world lead list leading into Tokyo. Anna Cockrell, who finished behind McLaughlin and Muhammad for bronze at the Trials, is a senior at the University of Southern California and won both the 100m hurdles and the 400m hurdles at the NCAA Championships earlier this month.

“Iron sharpens iron,” McLaughlin said post-raced when asked about competing with Muhammad.

McLaughlin competed at the 2016 Olympics as a high schooler, just 16 years old. She then competed for the University of Kentucky, winning an NCAA title before turning pro in 2018. In 2019 McLaughlin won a silver medal at the World Championships in the 400m hurdles.

She has been in three world record-setting races in the 400m hurdles, but this is the first time McLaughlin has been the record-breaker.

“It’s an honor,” McLaughlin said. “So many amazing women have come before me so many amazing women will come after me. I just want to be able to leave my mark and be a part of such an amazing sport.”

For now, she’s going to savour this moment as one that she will cherish for the rest of her life.

“It doesn’t last forever, and the glory is not mine,” McLaughlin said. “I really just want to be a vessel for the sport, and a vessel for God, and glorify him as much as I possibly can before I’m gone.”

McLaughlin and her coach, Bob Kersee, have been fine tuning for this race all year, including working on her stride patterns and on the 100m hurdle distance.

“For a lot of our season, we were doing the 100 hurdles and a lot of people didn’t understand because they didn’t see what it was translating to in our practices for the 400m hurdles,” McLaughlin explained. “I kind of knew right away. It was making sense. As time progressed, the strength started to build.”



Sydney McLaughlin (right), Dalilah Muhammad (left) and Anna Cockrell (center) make up your women’s 400m hurdle team heading to Tokyo. Photo by Matt Parker

Her coach was also key to helping her stay collected when her race was delayed by about five hours due to extreme heat, a last minute shift that threw many athletes off-balance.

“Bobby is always talking about Muhammad Ali--you have to be ready for that left hook and we definitely were,” McLaughlin said with a laugh. “You can’t control what happens to you but you can control how you respond to it.

Despite the delay, McLaughlin said she knew in her heart that there was something special in store for today.

“I knew from the moment I woke up today that it was just going to be a great day.”

As she heads to the Olympics as the number one ranked athlete and world record holder, we hope what’s in store is another great day.

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