

Picabo Street talks motherhood, birth control

Former Olympic skier on why she underwent permanent Essure procedure

Although she retired from professional skiing in 2002, Picabo Street shows no signs of slowing down. Active in a variety of philanthropic causes, this busy mom-of-three will also be in Vancouver next month, covering the 21st Winter Olympic Games for TODAY.

We recently talked with Picabo, 38, about life with sons Eli, 6 1/2, Treyjan James, 5 1/2 and Dax Meyer, 5 months, whether she'd like to see the boys pursue sports careers, and why she's decided to undergo the permanent birth control procedure Essure, which consists of the insertion of small flexible micro-inserts through the body's natural pathways and into the fallopian tubes, forming a barrier that prevents sperm from reaching the egg.

Q: With the Olympics just around the corner, has it gotten easier to watch from the sidelines or do you wish you were still competing?

A: I have actually always been confident about my retirement. I will look forward to cheering on Team USA.

Q: Congratulations on your newest addition, Dax! What are his latest milestones?

A: Thank you. He rolled over for the first time before Christmas and he eats four man size meals a day... and he is just five months old!

Q: What role — if any — do you feel your experiences as a professional athlete play in parenthood?

A: There are a lot of skills that I brought from athletics to parenthood: time management, patience, sacrifice and humility — but being a parent is way harder.

Q: Tell us a little about Eli and Treyjan ... What is it like to have two boys so close in age?



Picabo Street is shown with her husband, John Reeser, and their three children.
 Courtesy Picabo Street

A: It is amazing how different they are. Trey is 5 1/2 and Eli is nearly 7 (they are 17 months apart). Trey is artistic, imaginative, goofy — Eli is scientific, factual, worried. They are so much fun. Seventeen months seems perfect, they love each other and fight like typical brothers.

Q: Are they showing any early inclination for skiing? Is a career in sports something you'll encourage or dissuade?

A: They both love skiing, Eli seems to really have a knack for it — a lot of perseverance — I will absolutely encourage a career in sports. Sports teaches you a lot about yourself.

Q: Will you bring your family to Vancouver? Do you have any advice for other working moms?

A: When I take my kids to the Olympics I wanted them to be old enough to remember it, and to have the experience make an impact in their lives. My family is still a smidge too young to do Vancouver this year. I am really enjoying being a mom and the challenges and rewards it brings, but I am very much looking forward to working again and having my own identity being reinstated — not just as mom. I am giving myself the right to get back in the saddle and be a working mom.

Q: We know you are a passionate person, what causes are you advocating now?

A: I am active with the National Children's Alliance, a child advocacy organization focused on awareness and prevention of child abuse. Also, after everything I have been through, I am a major health advocate and currently I have been raising awareness for the Essure permanent birth control procedure. It is important that women educate themselves. I have also always been a huge advocate of wearing a helmet whenever possible — skiing, biking, motorcycles, whatever — it's important for people to wear helmets.

Q: Was it a difficult decision to undergo the Essure procedure, or did you know instinctively you were done having children?

A: When John and I got married we knew we wanted a baby together because we had mine and his, and now Dax is the glue that unites our family. By the time I decided to have the Essure procedure I was 100% sure I was done, and that I needed a solution in the permanent category. Surgery was nothing new for me, but it was really nice to find another option which happened to not be surgical. Essure is perfect in that way — I didn't have to take time out of my schedule for the procedure or recovery. It really was a breeze.

Q: Why are you deciding to speak publicly about a private decision like your birth control choice?

A: I am speaking out about my choice because I was shocked to learn how few women, myself included, don't know about all options when it comes to our health. It just seems crazy to me that the information is not more readily accessible and current, like the information posters on the back of the door in doctor's offices. Why did I have to find the information myself? I don't want everyone to have to work so hard.

Q: What advice do you give to women whose families are complete?

A: If your family is complete and you are sure, then you are obviously in the "permanent birth control should be seriously considered" category and you should ask your doctor about your options. Essure was the right choice for me. I always say: education and information = power.

Q: What's your favorite thing about being a mom? What could you live without?

A: My favorite thing about being a mom is watching my children's first experiences first in life — touching an ice cube for the first time and being shocked by how cold it is. With two boys so close in age, I could live without constantly feeling like a referee.

Picabo — married since 2008 to John Reeser — will be providing live updates from Vancouver via Twitter.



Three-time Olympian in Alpine skiing Picabo Street retired in 2002 and says she looks forward to being a working mom.
 Jonathan Selkowitz / AP