

DISTANCE SWIMMING

By Dennis Matuch



The results of the first two professional races of 1974 are in. Both races took place in Argentina. The first swim was held in the tourist region of Mar del Plata in the Atlantic Ocean. Currents and tides affected the swimmers for approximately 25 miles. Only five swimmers were able to finish the race within the time limit (three hours after the winner). Those who finished the race within the time limit were the only ones eligible for the prize money. The low water temperature (68 degrees) combined with five foot waves forced quite a few of the competitors out of the money. Out of the 21 competitors in this race, only these finished: 1st, Horatio Iglesias (Argentina), 12 hrs.; 2nd, Claudio Plitt (Argentina), 12 hrs. 30 min.; 3rd, Jon Erikson (U.S.A.), 13 hrs. 36 min.; 4th, Marwan Shedid (Canada), 15 hrs. 21 min.; 5th, Oscar Bernatene (Argentina), 15 hrs.-plus.

A sad note of this swim is that at the time of this writing — 49 days after this swim took place (Feb. 17th) — the swim committee has not paid the pro-swimmers their money. I personally believe it will be quite some time before they do — if ever — as the Argentine swim committees are well known for their misplaced funds and changing government's routines. I myself thought that since last year's champion Horatio Iglesias was one of the organizers that there would be no problems as Horatio is very respected in the sport. Perhaps there is a very good reason for the delay in payment. I hope to be able to answer that in next month's column.

The second race was held on February 24th. It was the Santa Fe-Coronda swim which is a river swim of 40 miles. It was down river all the way. Thus it was equivalent to a 16- or 18-mile open water swim. Twenty-four of the 30 swimmers who started the race were able to finish as the flat water and 82 degree temperature were ideal swim conditions. Raul Villagomez (Mexico) was the surprise of the race as he led for the first seven hours before being bested by the startling newcomer from Argentina, Claudio Plitt, in the last half hour of the race. Here are the results of that second race (24 deep): Claudio Plitt (Arg.), 7 hrs. 46 min.; Villagomez (Mex.), 7:48; Iglesias (Arg.), 7:49; Schans (Hol.), 8:01; Erikson (U.S.A.), 8:17; Nyad (U.S.A.), 8:22; Shedid (Can.), 8:27; Aguirre (Arg.), 8:35; Marchetti (Arg.), 8:38; Barregro (Arg.), 8:40; Carrizo (Arg.), 8:51; Guiscardo (Arg.), 9:13; Venturini (Arg.), 9:11; Alzugaray (Arg.), 9:20; Conte (Arg.), 9:21; Marzo (Arg.), 9:24; Schelleberg (Arg.), 9:29; Cruz (Arg.), 9:31; Romero (Arg.), 9:40; Meza (Arg.), 9:50; Garrido (Arg.), 9:54; Romero (Arg.), 9:57; Upton (Arg.), 10:01; Cerlinni (Arg.), 10:14.

I am very happy to say that the swimmers were paid for their efforts in this race.

My sincere thanks to pro-marathoners Jon Erikson and Diana Nyad, both of the United States, for sending me post-haste the results and facts on these races. We can all be proud also of their exceptionally fine showing in this arduous sport. The United States is right up there in professional marathon swimming.

In our next pro-swimming column, I will be giving a run-down on the pro races coming up this summer. It looks like it should be one of the best seasons ever. There are quite a number of good professional races on the schedule.

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MAY, 1974

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