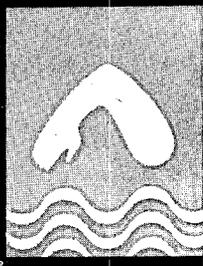


DISTANCE SWIMMING

By Conrad Wennerberg



The waters of professional marathon swimming are turning greener each year. This year there will be over \$85,000 in prizes offered by the sponsors of five pro races in Italy, Canada and the United States. Others in England, Canada and Yugoslavia also will be holding three pro races but the sizes of their purses have not been finalized.

Unfortunately, two of the races will be on the same day. The Capri-Naples 18 miler and the three-part Chibougamau (Quebec) are both on July 10th. The total purse at Capri-Naples is around \$5,000. The winner can walk away with about \$900. The first woman to finish can win about \$700. Unlike Canadian and American waters, the Capri-Naples marathon has never had a woman as overall winner (Greta Andersen and Judith DeNys have been number one over the men at least four times on this side of the Atlantic). However, if a woman did finish first over-all at Capri-Naples, the sponsors would have to give her both prizes.

A few hours after the Capri marathon is over pro marathoners will be stroking away for a \$15,000 purse at a closed circuit course at Chibougamau. It will be a three-part race with two hour intervals between them. The first race will be a ten miler with the winner getting \$1,500. The second race is a five miler with first place worth \$700 and the third race, a single circuit of the course adding up to 1.23 miles, (they use a metric course at Chibougamau) will have \$300 going to the winner.

There is an excellent breakdown in prizes for each swimmer who completes a race. The Chibougamau marathon looks like a sure winner for the swimmers and spectators since after last year's inaugural swim there was great public demand for a repeat marathon.

July 16th and 17th see the return of the ever popular LaTuque Marathon. The sponsors have however changed the format of their marathon. Instead of a 24-hour-team (one pair of swimmers to a team) marathon they have decided on a three-part race. After a one hour qualification race on the 16th the first race will be held later in the day. It will be three hours long with a \$4,300 purse and a winner's prize of \$1,000.

On the following day, the 17th, the second and third races will be held. The second race will offer a \$5,400 purse and will also be three hours long. The winner picks up \$1,500 for his efforts. The third and final race offers a \$7,000 purse but is only two hours and worth \$2,500 to the winner. The slower swimmers will be

eliminated from entering the second and third races. There is also a nice breakdown in prizes for all the swimmers.

On July 31st the granddaddy of all professional swims will take place with the 23rd annual 19 mile crossing of Lake St. John, Quebec. There is a whopping \$30,000 purse being offered by the sponsors this year which includes \$2,000 in extras for a new record or being the first woman across. The St. John marathon attracts so much attention every year that among the 25,000 spectators there are sure to be famous personalities. In the past Johnny Weissmuller would take it in and Canadian Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau always tries to be on hand for the swim if he can.

The City of Chicago will again be holding their 10 mile Lake Front Festival International Marathon this year on August 31st. The sponsors of this popular race have taken their cue from the famous Canadian National Exhibition marathons of past years. While other marathons are forced by the necessity of facilities and safety to limit the field to about 20 swimmers, the Chicago marathon is open to all qualified swimmers. The course is half mile and in a straight line in about seven feet of water. It is only ten yards out from a beautifully tailored beach mall.

The area is only a little distance from Chicago's downtown area and is regularly patrolled by Chicago's famous Park District lifeguards who have been compared with Australia's Beach Patrol. The swim sponsors feel they can handle any number of qualified swimmers who show up. This is the perfect swim to test your merits against some of the world's great marathon swimmers. Just to be able to finish is an accomplishment.

If you want to try for the money all you have to average is 22 to 28 minutes per mile. The winner should average about 21 minutes per mile so there is your goal if you want to pick up the \$3,000 winner's prize. There is \$12,000 left for the rest of the swimmers. The water temperature averages 72 degrees for this time of year. I strongly urge any senior college swimmer or masters competitor no matter what age to send for an entry blank to:

Mayor's Office
Department of Special Events
City Hall
Chicago, Illinois 60602

On August 7th the Chamber of Commerce of Paspébiac on the Gaspe Peninsula, Quebec, hope to have their pro marathon race ready. It will cross Chaleur Bay which opens to the Gulf of St. Lawrence.

It is a 14 mile swim in cool water. Last year the sponsors wanted to see if the bay could be swum so they hired a top pro marathoner, Jon Erikson, to try it as a solo. Jon ticked it off in eight hours and 46 minutes and was so popular with the crowds that the sponsors decided to make it a pro race this year.

Also on the agenda awaiting to be finalized are the 28 mile Saguenay River, 15 mile Ohrid River (Yugoslavia) and the Queen's Jubilee English Channel Race. The Queen's Race is attempting to have their race sometime between August 22nd and the 27th. The English have been instrumental in putting marathon swimming on the map with their cross-channel (21 miles) races and generous prizes of the 1950's.

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