

DISTANCE SWIMMING

By Dennis Matuch



I received quite a few letters regarding the discrepancy in times from the two major individual swims this year. Many could not figure out how the Chicago 10-mile swim winner could break the world's record for that distance with an average mile 23:56.5, while the two co-winners of the St. Johns 25-mile race averaged 20:02.7 per mile. I did not make a mistake on the times in these two particular swims, as they are the two official times given out by the officials of probably the two most reputable professional swims in the world.

Though there was not any difference in the water temperatures and waves in these two swims, and both were very accurately surveyed prior to the contest, the St. John swim is started on the outlet of a river called the Peribonka, and the swimmers start in front of a town of the same name. The competitors have almost four miles of about seven to nine mile per hour current along with them until they reach the open water of the lake.

The lake can also be a factor in helping the swimmer do some mile times he could never do in a pool, as St. John is a large shallow lake, and when the waves roll with the swimmer, one can almost body surf for some 20 miles — of course the waves can also come the other way. Also, St. John has a large silver dome of a church to guide the swimmer and his crew (the St. John sponsors equip all the swimmers with a small power craft with a guide and motorman — the swimmer may have his trainer or coach in this boat also, but no more than three to a boat) straight across the lake.

Also, the Chicago Swim had no waves of any kind this year, and at the same time, the time turned in by Schans, the winner

from Holland, could have been as much as 10 minutes faster if Schans was in his best form and had not competed in the 28-mile Chicoutime River Swim six days before. Schans was six minutes ahead of his world record time at five miles, and eight minutes ahead at eight miles, but only broke his world record time by one-and-a-half minutes at the end of the race. Schans died in the last mile-and-a-half, but no one could tell as he increased his stroke rate these last two miles, and arrogantly swam wide of the course. No one could have played his cards better, but then Schans is in his fifth year as a pro and does know all the tricks.

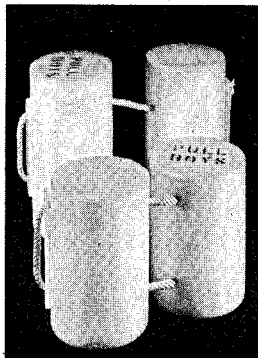
Well, I hope I have cleared up a few reasons why it may seem like a swim may not have had its course surveyed too well. I know from 15 years of pro swimming, that swimming 28 miles down the Sagurnay River in Quebec in 5½ hours, or swimming for three hours at 85 strokes a minute and not going more than 50 yards in the same river another year are all parts of the game. Tides, currents, water temperature, air temperature, wind, fog, rain, marine life, etc., all have much to do with the winners and times of all professional swims.

If any of the readers really like to see something different in swimming, try taking in a pro-marathon this summer. I will be giving out information on them as fast as I get the dates. Also, if there are any graduating swimmers who would like to join our World Professional Marathon Swimming Federation, please drop me a line in care of *Swimming World* and I will give you all the details. I am also hoping to run the Illinois State Master's Swim Championship the last week of April of this year, and any and all who are interested again may write me in care of *Swimming World*. I myself think Masters Swimming is the greatest for keeping one's competitive drive and conditioning up in the off season.

DEATH LURKS IN UNDERWATER SWIMMING

Modern day swimmers laugh at the mention of the old 'plunge and glide' event. Yet many swimmers like to try their skill and endurance in just such ventures. It can have a very unpleasant consequence for even top swimmers as they find that it may not be an athletic contest but a duel with death. The unsuspecting underwater swimmer thinks he is on his way to an extraordinary achievement when in reality he may be plunging to his death.

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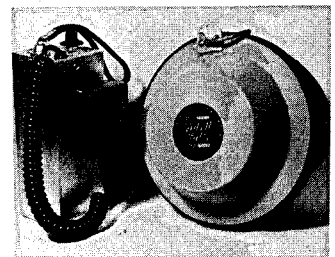


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