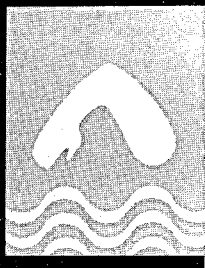


DISTANCE SWIMMING

By Dennis Matuch



The 23rd Annual Lake St. John 20-mile Marathon will long be remembered. The Quebec lake temperature registered 68 to 72 degrees in July and the unruffled water created one of the smoothest crossings ever.

The race began in the Peribonca River which empties into Lake St. John. Lanes are set up in the river for a departure sprint of approximately a half-mile. The swimmers first swim upstream against a slight current, round a lane marker, and then begin the downstream lap which ends with an entry into Lake St. John for the "meat" of the marathon.

Two Americans won the departure sprint and \$500. John Kinsella finished the sprint in 9:39.90 to collect \$300 and Bill Heiss, from Wyoming, placed second in 10:04.10 for \$200.

Two 19-year-old Canadians won the women's prizes. Loreen Passfield defeated last year's women's world champion marathoner Cynthia Nicholas 10:34.4 to 10:36.9.

It was a solo swim for Kinsella. By the time he reached Roberval across the lake, he held a comfortable 34-minute lead over Heiss who finished second.

Kinsella collected the departure sprint money and the \$7,000 grand prize, but the arrival sprint prize almost eluded him. Kinsella nearly collapsed from fatigue, but managed to overcome his weariness and finish to capture the \$300 arrival sprint prize.

The arrival sprint is an arbitrary distance of three-quarters of a mile. Heiss also swam a solo race and his second place finish was worth \$4,000.

While Kinsella and Heiss swam in solitude, those struggling behind found a deadly earnest for not only the money, but also to finish before the 10-hour time limit had expired.

For the first 15 miles, a pack of six swimmers formed. Five were experienced professionals—Claudio Plit of Argentina, the 1975 world champion, Raul Villagomez of Mexico, Magdy Mandour of Egypt, Marwan Saleh of Syria and Jon Erikson of America. The sixth was an unbelievable 16-year-old Egyptian, Nasser el Shazly.

On July 10, el Shazly became the youngest person to win a professional or amateur marathon. He captured the 18-mile Capri-Naples race.

For fifteen miles, on Lake St. John, el Shazly battled with the others until Claudio Plit broke during the last five miles. Nasser also pulled out but that was as far as he went.

It was also during the late stages that Jon Erikson weakened and was overtaken by the two Canadian women. The only marathoner who seemed complacent throughout the race was Dennis Matuch.

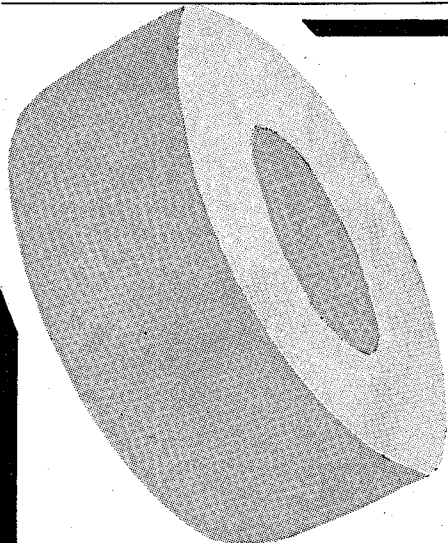
This was Matuch's 13th crossing of the lake. At 35, Matuch is winding up his phenomenal career with just one goal. With one more crossing, matuch will tie Canadian Rejean LaCourse's record of 14 crossings. In 1979, Matuch hopes to break the record.

Another little known fact of this year's race was Cynthia Nicholas' plan. Cynthia showed up on the pro circuit this year 18 pounds heavier than when she won the women's championship last year. The extra weight slowed her so her countrywoman Loreen Passfield beat her in each of the pro races in Canada this year.

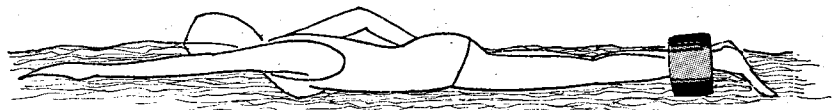
There was method in Cynthia's plan, however. After the Lake St. John marathon, she and her mother headed for England. On September 8, Cynthia demolished the record for a Channel double crossing. She became the first woman to complete the swim and lowered Jon Erikson's record by more than ten hours. Her 42 to 44 mile swim took 19:55.00.

1977 Lake St. John Results

1. John Kinsella (USA), 7:32.31	\$7,000
2. Bill Heiss (USA), 8:06.05	\$4,000
3. Claudio Plit (arg.), 8:12.37	\$3,000
4. Nasser el Shazly (Egy.), 8:16.41	\$2,000
5. Magdy Mandour (Egy.), 8:22.57	\$1,500
6. Raul Villagomez (Mex.), 8:29.43 (tie)	\$900
6. Marwan Saleh (Syria), 8:29.43 (tie)	\$900
8. Loreen Passfield (Can.), 8:42.30 (first woman)	\$500 plus \$500
9. Cynthia Nicholas (Can.), 8:55.59 (second woman)	\$500
10. Jon Erikson (USA), 9:21.33	\$500
11. Dennis Matuch (USA), 9:53.25	\$500
12. Nazala Moustafa (Egy.), 9:53.55 (third woman)	\$500
13. Ibrahim Moustafa (Egy.), 9:54.09	\$500



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