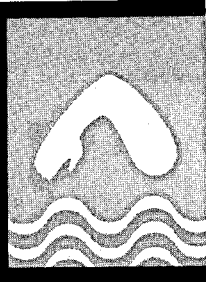


DISTANCE SWIMMING

By Dennis Matuch



One of the newer marathon swims on the pro circuit is the Paspebiac race. Held for the first time last year as an invitation-only event, the race sponsors have decided to increase the invitations from six in 1977 to eight or nine for 1978 (Aug. 8). The sponsors have also upped their purse to over \$12,000.

Paspebiac takes its name from an Indian word meaning "point of land." It is about 200 miles to the east of Mont-Joli on the south side of the Gaspé Peninsula in Quebec, Canada. On its front door is Chaleur Bay.

The bay can be a Dr. Jekyll-Mr. Hyde as far as water temperature is concerned (72 degrees on some days and 51 degrees on others). Last year it was both on the race day—cold at the start and finish but warm in between.

The Paspebiac sponsors were highly satisfied with last year's marathon and its corresponding publicity for the delightfully picturesque town. The mayor was quoted as saying, "It is the event of the Peninsula." And picturesque is the way the sponsors want to keep it since Paspebiac is known throughout Eastern United States and Canada as one of the vacation gems of the Eastern Seaboard. It is a small commercial, educational and handicraft center especially noted as one of the oldest and most interesting of Gaspesian sites.

Last year's marathoners were astounded by the old-world genteel treatment accorded to them. Upon arrival they were given complimentary rooms at the stately Auberge du Parc Motel which originally was a stone mansion built in the early 1800's by a wealthy businessman. Beautifully preserved with its interior woodwork still pristine in its original beauty, the hotel also served as host to the many vacationers who came to watch the finish of last year's marathon.

The newly built reception room seating 300 was the site of the award ceremonies last year and will do the same this year. And that isn't all. The hotel sits in a 600,000 square foot woods with a beach on Chaleur Bay. No trouble for the marathoners sleeping, as well as the guests, since it is an area that doesn't allow seediness.

Each accepted marathoner is given a beautiful blue and white nylon jacket (with emblem) which he or she wears around town so that tourists and newspaper personnel can spot them.

All in all, the atmosphere of the Paspebiac marathon is that of the highly polished warm, friendly and cultured Ivy League college smack in the middle of a beautiful and world famous fishing area. And strangely enough the sophistication of the working population and the culturally-inclined vacationers is indistinguishable.

So this year's Paspebiac marathon which begins at the town of Grande-Anse and ends at Paspebiac 14 miles across Chaleur Bay looks like one of the upcoming pro marathons of the decade.

The one change in the race this year is that the sponsors have added two miles to the straight line course across the bay. There will be a one-mile starting sprint and a one-mile finishing sprint.

It'll be sixteen miles of swimming in one of the coldest water marathons in the world amongst some of the most beautiful mountain scenery in the world.

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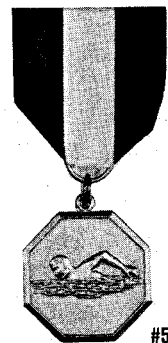
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