

Lake Ontario Solo

Facts:

- In August 1974, Diana Nyad attempted to complete the first round-trip crossing of Lake Ontario.
- She completed leg one (Toronto to Port Dalhousie) in approximately 18 hours and 20 minutes, becoming the first person to cross from north to south.
- Nyad says she lost consciousness approximately two hours into the return trip and was pulled from the water. (**NOTE:** This won't be the first time Nyad claims to have lost consciousness during a failed swim attempt. She may be telling the truth, or she may use "I passed out" to avoid admitting she quit. We'll likely never know.)
- According to news reports, the first leg began at approximately 10:05 a.m. on August 30 and ended at about 4:30 a.m. on August 31.
- Six swimmers crossed Lake Ontario before Nyad. The first was 16-year-old Marilyn Bell in 1954. Number six was 16-year-old Cynthia Nicholas. Two weeks before Nyad's crossing, [Nicholas smashed the overall record](#) by almost two hours.

1978

How the swim ends, version 1

[Nyad describing return trip attempt.]

"I walk back into the water at 1:30 A.M.; I am chilled to the bone but I start stroking, and after an hour or so, I feel better. During a breath I yell that I'm going to make it. Cliff [Lumsden, her trainer], gives me the thumbs-up sign. All my friends cheer from the yacht, and the flotilla of boats that has accompanied us through the night blare their horns. At 20 hours, 30 minutes, I lose consciousness."

Other Shores, p. 14

1976

How the swim ends, version 2

[Nyad revises her Lake Ontario story for Gertrude Ederle — Olympic champion and the first woman to swim the English Channel.]

"I heard what happened to you on your first Channel attempts,' Diana tells Miss Ederle, 'Someone touched you and you were disqualified.'

“Gertrude Ederle relives that moment: ‘Oh, I was so angry I’d only swallowed some salt water. My trainer sent someone in to get me. They said I was unconscious. I was no more unconscious than you are.’

“‘The same thing happened to me once,’ Diana says. ‘I’d just swum 32 miles across Lake Ontario and I was going for a double crossing and was signaling for my cup. Another swimmer who’d got in the water to pace me thought I was calling for help; she started to grab me. I tried to push her away and they disqualified me. After 20 hours. I’d been swimming 20 hours!’”

“Challengers of the Channel,” [p. 3](#); also see pp. [1](#), [2](#), and [4](#)

See also: “[I]f I get to the Florida coast, that will be one of the most historic moments in sports. I’m not going to compare it to Lindbergh, but it is certainly going to be bigger than Gertrude Ederle finishing the English Channel.”

[*It wasn’t* — Ed.]

[New Times](#), 26 Jun 1978 (pp. [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#))

1976

Be Best, Even When You’re Not

“I’m the only person to have crossed Lake Ontario.”

[Saturday Night Live](#), 11 Dec 1976

Those who swam before Nyad:

1. 1954, 16-year-old [Marilyn Bell](#) of New Toronto, Ontario.
2. 1956, [John Jaremey](#) of Toronto.
3. 1956, [Brenda Fisher](#) of Grimsby, Lincolnshire, England
4. 1957, [Bill Sadlo](#) of New York
5. 1957, [Jim Woods](#) of Orlando, Florida
1961, [Jim Woods](#)
6. 1975, 16-year-old [Cynthia Nicholas](#) of Scarborough, Ontario

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