

Diana's Kaleidoscopic Convalescence

Facts:

- In the summer of 1966, when Diana was 17, she spent approximately six weeks recovering from what she calls “viral endocarditis.” (She may very well have suffered from viral endocarditis, but I’ve learned not to believe anything she says without corroborating evidence.)
- Nyad was back [racing by February 1967](#). She must have begun training well before that.
- The Olympic Trials didn’t take place until August 1968, plenty of time for a great swimmer to recover and prepare. See, for instance, how Catie Ball got mono in January 1968, was out of the pool until April, [then set two world records](#) in August.

Red text = citations which include Nyad's own words

1966

Out of the water for at least two weeks

“[Coach Jack] Nelson will be without the services of two of his best girl swimmers — Mary Ann Brems and Diana Nyad. Both girls will be out of action for at least two weeks because of illness” ([Ft. Lauderdale News, Jul 16, 1966](#)).



[Ft. Lauderdale News, July 16, 1966](#)

1967

Six weeks out of the water in summer of 1966

“Miss Nyad’s heart is the biggest thing going for her. That’s saying a lot because last summer she suffered a virus of the heart which put her out of the water for six weeks.” ([Ft. Lauderdale News](#), Apr 26, 1967).

Author: [George Solomon](#), who went on to write for *The Washington Post* for almost 30 years. He also directed the Shirley Povich Center for Sports Journalism at the University of Maryland.

1975

“Heart virus” in 1964 causes her to miss nationals

“She started as a distance freestyler. In ninth grade, she swam as a backstroker and qualified for the nationals.* A heart virus made her miss them” ([Ft. Lauderdale News](#), Nov 16, 1975).

*Nyad did *not* qualify for the nationals as a ninth grader (1964). She didn’t qualify in 1965, either. However, we do have documentation indicating that an illness may have caused her to miss the 1965 time standard: [“If ‘Hairy’ Nelson”](#) | [“Long Wet Summer.”](#) She *did* qualify for short-course nationals in 1966 and 1968.

1976

Illness in 1967 caused her to miss the 1968 Olympic Trials

“In 1968 observers thought that Nyad was certain to make the Olympic team. “I was considered a ‘sure thing.’ The media considered it a tragic case when I didn’t make it. An attack of heart disease in the summer of 1967 slowed me down. I just wasn’t swimming fast enough to make the team. I was so disappointed, I stopped swimming. I went to India to meditate and do my drop-out thing for a while” ([Barnard Bulletin](#), 2 Feb 1976; complete issue [here](#)).

1976

4 months in bed

“Four months in bed took an irreversible toll on her sprinting time.

Diana says she had a friend who missed qualifying in ’68 by 6/100ths of a second and committed suicide.” [*I’ve found no evidence of this — Ed.*]

“It’s ingrained in you that the only reason you’ve been training since nine or ten is to be the best. To win those national championships or that Olympic gold medal”” (*Miami Herald*, [Marathon Woman](#), p. 4 [see also pages [1](#), [2](#), [3](#)], Dec 19, 1976).

1977

Nyad, Olympic caliber backstroker, bedridden for years

“By 16, Nyad was an Olympic caliber backstroker when she contracted endocarditis, a virus of the heart muscles and was bedridden for years” ([Minneapolis Star](#), May 1977).

1978

3 months strict bed rest . . . or maybe 2 with 1-month home confinement

“One day in June 1966, the summer after junior year, I had a scare of bad chest pains while training, and the EKG turned up a severe case of viral endocarditis.

[*Description of disease.*] I spent three months in strict bed rest. [*Description of the attentiveness of her family.*] When two months passed, I spent another month in more moderate bed rest, but still not going out of the house, much less exercising” ([Other Shores](#), p. 19).

1978

3 months in bed

“I stayed in bed every minute of every day for three months, the most significant experience of my early years” ([Chicago Tribune](#); also see [page 1](#) and [page 3](#)).

1978

4 months on her back

“An unexpected attack of endocarditis, an inflammation of the heart, put her on her back for four months and ended her dream of participation in the 1968 Olympics” ([Parade Magazine](#) , Aug 1978).

1981

4 months in the hospital, 6 more weeks in bed

“For four months she was in the hospital; for six more weeks on her back at home” ([Ft. Lauderdale News and Sun-Sentinel](#), page 1 [here](#)).

1981

1 year in bed

“An illness during her 16th summer was the turning point in Nyad’s life. Stricken with endocarditis, an inflammation of the heart, she was bedridden for a year” ([Orlando Sentinel](#)).

1983

4 Months in a hospital, more time at home

“Confined to a hospital for four months with more recuperation ahead of her, her Olympic hopes were doomed” ([Cincinnati Enquirer](#)).

1985

4 months on her back

“In 1966, a bout with viral endocarditis, a heart ailment, put Nyad flat on her back for four months” ([The Clarion-Ledger](#), Jackson, Mississippi).

2015

3 months in bed

“Junior year I contracted a heart disease called endocarditis, which required three months of strict bed rest. This was the time my sweet little sister Liza and I carved out a forever bond” ([Find a Way](#), p. 49).

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