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3 Jul 2010 – 17 Apr 2026

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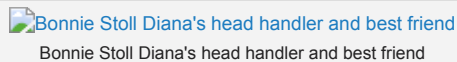
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Blog

Bonnie's Reflections – Lead Handler/Head Trainer

POSTED BY XTREME DREAM TEAM ON AUG 19, 2011 IN BLOG, SLIDER | 3 COMMENTS



Photos by Christi Barli

Bonnie Stoll, head handler on the Xtreme Dream swim, spent most of the 29 hours of the swim on the escort boat Voyager next to me. I asked her to tell us what it's like out there on the low platform closest to the swimmer, so she wrote this on the plane when we were flying back from Florida to California.

As my focus was solely on Diana it is only now that I can now reflect on my thoughts, feelings and memories of our attempt to swim from Cuba to Florida. Diana and I have been a team for the past 18 months on every training swim and every decision. This was our journey.

I have no idea of real time.

I know Diana jumped in the water at 7:45 pm.

That was the last time, until the finish, that I was aware of real time.

All that matters to me (and my team of 3 other handlers-Liza, Jon and Jesse),

Is 45 minutes and 90 minutes. I have a chrono-watch around my wrist that tells me 45 minutes is up and it is now time for Diana to have a 'water only' stoppage. My whistle toots, Diana glances my way and is pointed toward the pulley where the Camelbak has been sent out on a pulley so she can continue to swim straight ahead-after sipping water for about 30 seconds, drinks between 10 and 16 ounces, and then continues on her way.. This stoppage is purely for hydration-nothing else.

45 minutes later (90 minutes), it is time for Diana to come in towards the boat for a feeding. Whistle blows-in she comes. Her goggles are moved off her eyes up on to her cap. The right side of her cap gets folded up above her ear, as this is also time for a check in, "how are you feeling"?,"You look really strong', How is the shoulder- She needs to hear. I hand Diana an ice cube so that she can ice the shoulder as she is drinking our concoction made up of electrolytes, protein powder, fat, calories, a

Twitter Updates



- Without Bonnie as the rock, I'd never have been able to do anything. Here are her thoughts on the swim:
<http://ow.ly/67KKS> about 6 hours ago from HootSuite
- I'd like to share with all you the thoughts of a pivotal character in the Xtreme Dream: <http://ow.ly/67Cjy> #fearless about 8 hours ago from HootSuite
- The @latimes has a new article highlighting how there have been struggles, but I'm not giving up:
<http://ow.ly/66CTB> 04:20:13 PM August 18, 2011 from HootSuite
- Here's a new blog post on how much support @secret provided throughout my #XtremeDream. Thank you!
<http://ow.ly/65LZu> 07:02:59 PM August 17, 2011 from HootSuite
- @todayshow very excited and thank you for having me on! 11:57:16 AM August 17, 2011 from HootSuitein reply to todayshow
- Guess who will be on @todayshow THIS morning? Yup! Ms. Nyad! Tune in TODAY, Wed. last half hour, 8:30-9:00am EST. 11:55:53 AM August 17, 2011 from HootSuite

sports drink and of course, the obligatory water. She drinks between 24-35 ounces through another Camelbak hose She may also have 6-8 ounces of goo gel. At other stoppages she may have a few bites of bread, peanut butter and/or banana. These stoppages can take 2-4 minutes. It is Diana's only break and the only time she is capable of any human interaction. The cap comes down over the ear, the

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3 Jul 2010 - 17 Apr 2026

dried pineapple in her mouth to cut down on the swelling that the salt water is sure to cause. And she's off...back to do what she does best-swims and swims some more....

There are two more wrist-watches in my 'area'. They are permanently wrapped around the ladder and the wiring from the engine. One watch is used only for running time. This watch was much more important during our training swims as Diana has never gotten out of the water until her pre determined number of hours was accomplished. Not one minute earlier..12, 13, 14 15 and 18 hour training swims-not one minute early!

The third wrist-watch is a back up for my chrono watch-My job is to take care of Diana both emotionally and nutritionally and I aim to do my job.



Reinventing Yourself –Liza Eversole, Diana Nyad's sister

POSTED BY XTREME DREAM TEAM ON AUG 18, 2011 IN BLOG, SLIDER | 3 COMMENTS

 Liza Eversole and Diana Nyad

Diana's Sister, Liza Eversole with Diana

Forty-five years ago, the summer Diana turned 17, she was diagnosed with a virus in her heart called Endocarditis. She had been training for the Olympics since she was a 10 year old kid and I was the five year old with only her to look up to. A national record-setting sprint swimmer, she was a candidate for the backstroke on the Olympic team when the debilitating virus hit her heart. She had her heart set on qualifying for the Olympic trials but she had to stay in bed, so I sat with her all summer. Finally given a clean bill of health, Diana resumed training full throttle but she missed qualifying for the Olympic trials by something like a 100th of a second. So far behind in her training because of the medical issue, it's remarkable how close she came to qualifying (4th Olympic alternate in Munich Games). But that meant nothing to her, just as it means nothing to her to have gone 56 miles last week—the point for her is to get shore to shore; there are no compromises for such an athlete.

Her Olympic dream was dashed, and she had to get through the devastation. It was hard for me to watch, much like now. She felt a strong need, then, to demonstrate her worthiness as an Olympic contender. In the next year before she graduated high school, she was offered the opportunity to compete in the international marathon swim circuit. In long distance swimming, she was able to reinvent herself and take full mastery of her talent for setting goals and achieving goals. Diana may get angry at the injustice of it all—she put in the training only to be tripped up by a medical issue again, this time—but she doesn't wallow in self pity at any setbacks. Although this is hard, she will take the opportunity to make the most of this and be open to reinventing herself in a way that may even come as a big surprise to her.

—Liza Eversole



Off Camera at the Today Show

POSTED BY XTREME DREAM TEAM ON AUG 17, 2011 IN BLOG, SLIDER | 2 COMMENTS

- Guess who will be on @todayshow tomorrow morning? Yup! Ms. Nyad! Tune in tomorrow, Wed. last half hour,



<http://ow.ly/64JRp> 08:00:02 PM August 16, 2011 from HootSuite

- A new blog post is up! Learn all about Angie and how she helped with the Xtreme Dream. <http://ow.ly/64Duo> 05:11:33 PM August 16, 2011 from HootSuite

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3 Jul 2010 – 17 Apr 2026

Diana and Natalie Morales of the Today Show

Photo by Candace Lyle Hogan

Shortly before being interviewed by Natalie Morales on the Today show this morning, waiting in the Green Room, Diana is congratulated by Harriet Cole, the life coach featured on the program. Here is some of their conversation:

Harriet Cole: "I appreciate what you did and how you did it. You went about planning the swim as safely as you could, not recklessly. You were clear about what you wanted to do and you did your best, what more can you ask of yourself. Most things don't work out for most of us—the big things—so the way we handle things is all we have. And you handle things beautifully."

Diana Nyad: "The whole point of it for me was to learn to live without regret. Getting ready for the swim, all that training I put into it, has wiped out any second thoughts I might have had about the past. I realize that putting that kind of effort into every day feels wonderful. Whatever comes of it by the end of the day, nobody can take away from us what we put into it."

—©Candace Lyle Hogan reporting, 8-17-11



Secret was one of my biggest sponsors

POSTED BY XTREME DREAM TEAM ON AUG 17, 2011 IN BLOG, SLIDER | 2 COMMENTS

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3 Jul 2010 – 17 Apr 2026

Secret is one of the proud sponsors of Diana's Xtreme Dream

Photo by Christi Barli

The expedition nature of this Xtreme Dream of mine threw the cost of the entire operation into an Extreme category as well. Especially because the quest was thwarted by unpredictable hurricane action last year, which forced to postpone to this year, the actual costs in the end came up to a ballpark figure of about \$500,000.

I've read criticisms of raising and spending that enormous amount of money on an individual's selfish endeavor, compared to what social good could have been done with such a big pile of cash. Hard to argue against philanthropy.

Perhaps naive, but I surely hope this Swim has been a much, much larger beacon of hope to many of you out there than just my own personal ego fulfillment. I've said from the beginning, from my most authentic self, that the drive for me in all this has stemmed from the inspiring messages carried along with the hard training, the deep commitment, the joy of tapping one's highest potential, even the attempt to find grace in the face of disappointment.

Yes, I wanted to walk up onto the Florida shore. This is a bitter pill to swallow for me at the moment, this particular ending to what should have been my fairy tale come true. But the overwhelming response with which you have showered me, the uplifting sentiments of your being heartened by the pure effort my whole Team dug down for, has proven without doubt that this was no mere athletic event.

This was life. A microcosm of our collective Dreams. The belief that it is never too late. The willingness to take a risk, no matter how large failure looms ahead.

Secret was one of my biggest sponsors. They joined in and believed in the soul of what I was doing from Day One. Their huge online fan base, 1 ½ million strong, has buoyed me with resounding voices,

echoing what they have derived from the entire experience. And that is to live a fearless life is to live a life worth living.

What more could I have done? What more could I have wished for, in terms of touching a community

and being touched in return?

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Diana Nyad on the Today Show Wednesday, August 16th 8:30am

POSTED BY XTREME DREAM TEAM ON AUG 17, 2011 IN BLOG, SLIDER | 2 COMMENTS

[Click to watch!](#)

Dear Friends

Can't honestly even begin on the Swim.....out of the water just a week ago today.

Or did that really happen?

More, much more, in a few days but for tonight just wanted to let you know about my appearance on Today Show tomorrow.

Last half hour

8:30-9:00

ONWARD!! I MEAN IT!!

diana

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Dr. Michael Broder Diana's doctor on the swim

POSTED BY XTREME DREAM TEAM ON AUG 16, 2011 IN BLOG, SLIDER | 6 COMMENTS

 [Some tense moments as Diana comes out of the water after 29 hours of swimming](#)
Some tense moments as Diana comes out of the water after 29 hours of swimming

Photos by Christi Barli

Dear Diana,

If I was one tenth the public speaker you are, I would have said this last night, but better late than never:

When Bonnie and I pulled you into the Voyager last night, you said more than once how sorry you were to disappoint all your friends.

It's going to take a long time, maybe a lifetime, for me to process these last few days, but at this moment I am elated, moved, saddened, proud, alive, and more than a little exhausted. But one thing I most certainly am NOT is disappointed.

I am grateful for the privilege of having been part of this phenomenal team—each person more dedicated, caring, and focused than the next. And for the exhilaration I feel from having played a small part in this grand adventure.

But most of all for the knowledge that not only do real leaders exist in this world, but that I can call one of them my friend. Because leaders like you inspire us to reach beyond our grasp, to care about

something other than ourselves, and to live each day more fully.

And it makes no difference that you didn't crawl ashore in Key West, Key Largo, Miami, or anyplace

else. I wouldn't trade the gift of these last few days for all the hundred-mile swims in the universe.

[1,776 captures](#) hero.
3 Jul 2010 – 17 Apr 2026

Michael



A Little of Angie's Pasta

POSTED BY XTREME DREAM TEAM ON AUG 16, 2011 IN BLOG | 4 COMMENTS

 Angie & Christi

Angie & Christi

During the many months of Diana's training in open water around St. Maarten this spring and summer, the Sollingers, Angie, Marc, and daughter Sam, made her part of the family. On beach walks when she came back to LA periodically, Diana would often describe to me the good conversation, easy companionship, and home-cooked meals that awaited her there after some long stints in the water. In fact, a little of Angie's pasta gave Diana a boost toward the latter stages of the Cuba swim. Their growing friendship is one of the great things that came out of this swim.

In the moments after the swim, 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning of August 9, as Diana rested outside in the aft of Bellissimo, Angie Sollinger anticipated what Diana was likely to say first: "As soon as she catches her breath enough to speak, which is never very long," said Angie, "she's going to say she's sorry she disappointed us. Can you believe that? We're all standing here with chills, we're so inspired by her, and she's going to be thinking about that.

"In her mind—I know her—she's already thinking about us, not herself. During the training this summer, she'd come off a 10-hour swim and say, How are you doing? Are you bored to death? That's who she is. A person who can pull complete strangers together and rally whole governments around an effort, all for no personal gain. Diana didn't just do the swimming, she organized the whole thing." Angie planted her hands on her hips for emphasis. She knows, she saw all those hours of preparation and has the pasta to prove it. "The hard part was getting ready for this swim—how do you motivate people you just met?—to me that was the most amazing thing; the swimming was secondary."

—©Candace Lyle Hogan reporting, 2011



An Official Observer

POSTED BY XTREME DREAM TEAM ON AUG 16, 2011 IN BLOG, SLIDER | 0 COMMENTS

 Kate, one of the official observers of the swim

Kate, one of the official observers of the swim

Photo by Christi Barli

Early in the swim, in the bustle of boats rushing to the start in Cuba, in the excitement of tripping over everybody's camera equipment and charger, the serene face of Kate Alexander drew me near like the sound of a gentle surf at sunset. Kate was the first one I approached to talk to on the swim. I'm always to drawn toward calm in the midst of chaos, and had no idea she was one of the official observers, but was delighted to discover such a source of swimming expertise. Kate is an American living in the

Cayman Islands, sent by the International Swimming Hall of Fame to authenticate the swim. There were three such observers, enough to spell each other over the many hours anticipated.

Kate was thrilled to get the assignment: "I'm inspired myself by Diana's courage to attempt it and by her message that people our age are in the prime of life. We truly are getting better," she said. Kate herself, **6 captures** 2010 - 17 Apr 2026, shed a minute and 45 seconds off her personal best over one mile in open water.

just this June.

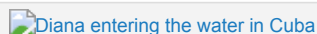
When the swim was over and Diana had finished saying a few words to the team, I sought out Kate again. "What a crazy, wacky, amazing woman," Kate was smiling, elated as we all were having just witnessed a 62 year old bounce back so quickly after swimming 56 miles. "She's so grounded, so substantive," Kate searched for the words to describe how amazed she was at the swimmer's lucidity of mind after such an effort. "I can't believe that after 30 years off—not swimming at all—that in just two years anyone could build up to a 29-hour swim," said Kate. "There's a lot of muscle memory in swimming, so she had the base. But to build up to that degree of strength and endurance in just two years..., and look at her...if her breathing hadn't been compromised...looks like she could go on forever."

—©Candace Lyle Hogan reporting on August 9, 2011, 3 or 4 in the morning



Feats of mind and body

POSTED BY XTREME DREAM TEAM ON AUG 15, 2011 IN BLOG | 2 COMMENTS



Diana entering the water in Cuba

Photo by Christi Barli

I wonder how many understand what feats of mind and body Diana has been performing for two years now, out of sight of camera or spotlight, day in, day out—come to think of it, maybe the kind we all do in one way or another, just getting through some days and weeks, if you get my drift. In any case, she does hers in a state of sensory deprivation—in a tight swim cap with water slapping against her ears, goggles fogged, the disorienting drift of the waves—she can't hear or see very well and with fatigue can come delirium. She's hallucinated birds dive-bombing her swim cap and been seasick during swims for hours on end, only to recover her strength and clarity again, time and time again. This is part of what the training is about, coming back from the undulating ups and downs. Months and months of strenuous interval training in a pool, monotonous, rhythmic hours in open water, so much of what goes into this sport of long distance swimming only a few people ever see. "Other sports seem so jolly and versatile compared with the grind of long distance swimming," Diana was quoted saying shortly before I met her. Sounds a lot like life. Maybe it takes a jolly and versatile person to put this metaphor on the map.

©Candace Lyle Hogan, Aug6



10 hours Before Take-Off

POSTED BY XTREME DREAM TEAM ON AUG 15, 2011 IN BLOG | 5 COMMENTS



Take-Off

Commodore Eschrich and Diana at Cuban Press Conference August 7, 2011, 10 hours before Take-Off

Photo by Christi Barli

First from me: "The man and friend who made the Cuban side of this endeavor happen was the

Commodore of the Club Nautica Yacht Club at Hemingway Marina. Commodore Eschrich not only gave

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3 Jul 2010 - 17 Apr 2026

JUL AUG SEP
20
2010 2011 2012



About this capture

location, etc. The Commodore proved himself to be a tremendously likeable, sporting, passionate Teammate to us in Cuba. He welled up with tears this morning of the press conference, just hours before I jumped in the water, and when I was back in Florida, disappointed and yet proud of the effort, this is what Commodore Eschrich wrote me":

Good morning dear Diana:

With all my love and sincerity I want to let you know that at the Hemingway Club in Cuba we are all very proud of the feat you have accomplished by swimming 29 hours in direction from Havana to Key West without a shark cage. As far as we know no human being has established a record of this nature. You deserve all of our acknowledgement and congratulations. I dare to say that millions and millions of people of all ages around the world admire your valor and will to overcome obstacles and triumph. Your name and swim will forever be engraved in the history of the nautical world with gold letters.

Now you are the example and guide for those of us who are beyond 60, and why not, for those younger that respect you and which you have inspired for a fuller life while enjoying the ocean and its conservation. You have managed to unite the countries of the United States and Cuba a little more, and especially the nautical communities of both countries.

We sincerely thank you that your swim was also dedicated to kick off the 20th anniversary of the Hemingway International Nautical Club of Cuba. We feel very honored. You are now a part of the family of the Hemingway Nautical Club and the Board of Directors has declared you an Honorary Member. We eagerly await your visit to deliver to you personally the certificate, which credits this to you. I take advantage again to reiterate my congratulations, my acknowledgement and admiration. A strong hug from this sincere friend who loves you dearly.

–Commodore Eschrich



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Diana Nyad's Xtreme Dream

"Diana is more than a swimmer. She's a beacon of hope to us all that we can dream big, live life large, and look back at all of it with no regrets whatsoever."

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- Bonnie's Reflections – Lead Handler/Head Trainer
- Reinventing Yourself –Liza Eversole, Diana Nyad's sister
- Off Camera at the Today Show
- Secret was one of my biggest sponsors
- Diana Nyad on the Today Show Wednesday, August 16th 8:30am

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- Xtreme Dream Team on Diana's Deep Moment
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- jean golden on Dr. Michael Broder Diana's doctor on the swim

Archives

- August 2011 (32)
- July 2011 (20)
- June 2011 (11)
- May 2011 (15)
- April 2011 (4)
- March 2011 (2)
- February 2011 (1)
- January 2011 (2)
- October 2010 (3)
- September 2010 (7)
- August 2010 (14)
- July 2010 (13)

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3 Jul 2010 - 17 Apr 2026

2010 2011 2012

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