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# Diana Nyad Xtreme Dream 103 miles. Cuba to Florida. Summer 2011

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## Blog

### The Wisdom of Age

POSTED BY XTREME DREAM TEAM ON AUG 14, 2011 IN BLOG | 0 COMMENTS



Diana Nyad and Bonnie Stoll

Diana and Bonnie

Harnessing the wisdom of age and experience, taking her own counsel and Bonnie's about training not more but smarter, Diana announced that she was in better shape for this swim than she was for the one in 1978 and 1979. In the latter, she swam the farthest distance in history—she's already the world champion!—so she wasn't doing it for the record books. On some level, she was doing it for all of us, for everybody—and for Bonnie especially, as the friend closest to her who matches her sophistication in the nuanced appreciation of athletic achievement.

Along the way, though, in all these training swims, I sense that Diana discovered in herself deeper and deeper levels of motivation, and possibly something that she's never experienced before in its pure form, unadulterated by the angst of youth: love for the swim itself and for her particular prowess in going at it. I could be wrong, you'll have to ask her, but in 35 years of making a study of her, I've never known Diana to say what she said at the team meeting in Cuba just a few hours before the swim start: "I'm going to enjoy the heck out of this swim!"

### That Pesky Agony

POSTED BY XTREME DREAM TEAM ON AUG 14, 2011 IN BLOG | 0 COMMENTS



On the Cuban shore

On the Cuban shore

### Twitter Updates



- "As uplifting as it can be to watch her swim these things, believe me, it's equally harrowing..." <http://ow.ly/62QPX> about 35 minutes ago from HootSuite
- 61-year-old swimmer ends battle-of-the-sexes debate <http://ow.ly/62OEE> about 2 hours ago from HootSuite
- Sign-up for the Xtreme Dream newsletter. Images and anecdotes that go beyond tweets! Click the icon on the left below Diana's pic!... 02:20:49 PM August 13, 2011 from HootSuite
- Here's a new video message directly from Diana to her fans on her #XtremeDream! <http://ow.ly/61OUI> #fearless 04:29:17 PM August 12, 2011 from HootSuite
- Here's a new video message directly from Diana to her fans on her #XtremeDream! <http://ow.ly/61DyR> #fearless 01:50:02 PM August 12, 2011 from HootSuite
- Sign-up for the Xtreme Dream newsletter. Images and anecdotes that go beyond tweets! Click the icon on the left below Diana's pic!... 03:54:31 PM August 11, 2011 from HootSuite
- View from Steve who was one of the observers on the swim. He's been a

Photo by Christi Barli

There isn't a person who witnessed this Cuba swim, or knows Diana and how she trains, who didn't feel

—at some point or other or throughout—absolute certainty that she would make it. I know that's an impossible thing to say, given the variables, except that Diana in her athletic career already overcame the impossible many times over, for a decade in the 1970s. Ask Jean Golden, who was at the

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great supporter and friend all the way through. <http://ow.ly/606uO> 07:52:57 PM  
August 10, 2011 from HootSuite

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dock to greet her this time, and who accompanied her many years before me. She's seen it all: Diana, pecked by seagulls (or hallucinating that she has been), recovering completely from eight hours of seasickness in the water, breathing her 6.1 lung capacity despite her throat threatening to close over from saltwater exposure. And then there's that "pesky agony," as Elaine Lafferty, fellow blogger on the swim this time, came to call it, the everpresent, unavoidable, ever-enduring-as-the-Nyad-is pain of it all.

As uplifting as it can be to watch her swim these things, believe me, it's equally harrowing. Check out the team picture before the start; I'm the only one not smiling and, duh, could that be because I know what's ahead? (That pesky agony.) Regardless, this swimmer can appear to be at death's door, and then suddenly rebound, stronger than ever for miles and miles and hours and hours more. Diana Nyad turns it around and she knows she can. In fact, one of the hallmarks of her recent swimming—her training swims over the last two years—is the power of her maturity: more jokes and laughs at feeding time and the elimination of angry outbursts (that pesky acting out). Whatever drains her energy now, she gets rid of, and that's a model of the positive power of choice we could all follow.

—@Candace Lyle Hogan, August 12, 2011

## World Class At 61

POSTED BY XTREME DREAM TEAM ON AUG 13, 2011 IN BLOG, SLIDER | 5 COMMENTS



Diana Nyad Receiving Nourishment  
Diana Nyad Receiving Nourishment through a CamelBak

Photo by Christi Barli

There is no other way to say it: Many parts of a long distance swim—of any extreme sport perhaps—are, as my old granny used to say, "not pretty." Often in the aftermath of many miles, the transition from one churning element (the water) to another (the boat) results in nausea, shortlived but severe. This time Diana spent more than an hour vomiting off the aft deck of the Bellissimo, the biggest boat housing the crew, where she was transported after being taken from the water. Carried up the steps to a chair in her robe, she leaned her head against the railing wordlessly, still having difficulty breathing. In between her dry heaves, the doctor took her vitals as Alyce Torsden, a retired nurse, wrote them down. Mark Sollinger, a new, good friend with whom Diana spent many hours philosophizing and soul-searching through this past spring and early summer of training, never left her side.

After what seemed a long time (but then in endurance events time does lose its ordinary meaning), supported on both arms Diana walked almost on her own two feet to the sofa in the main cabin to lie down. Right away, the tears began, another feature of the aftermath being emotional release. So long tethered to will yet spiritually widening, the heart of the distance swimmer roars in the water then overflows on land. No wonder the ancients could conceive of the rivers and oceans created by gods and demigods in human form. I could almost imagine it.

There too, on the sofa, she spilled her guts, this time with words, and a lot, but maybe not enough. Soon after being assured that, no, she did not let us down, that this was not a failure at all, that it's easy to succeed at easy things but truly inspiring to set your sights on the seemingly impossible and then

actually achieve more than half of it, Diana regained her composure. "So I'm disappointed, but proud, is that it?" she ventured. Yes, yes, I nodded, trying not to show how elated I felt to have her back with us again, alive, wanting to live and to do so without permanent impairment.

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ourselves. Diana Nyad is in mourning. Among us, she is the world-class athlete still, as she was so many years ago. World-class even at the age of 61 and she wanted to show the world. More than that, she wanted to experience that state in this swim, to be the beautiful swimmer she is, from shore to shore. Just one more time, to feel what her body could do over these magical waters; to make the connection between continents; to show that we are nothing without connection, and that those clockwise and counterclockwise gyres caused by wind over continents separate unto themselves are currents that can be crossed, if we decide to. And if we get a break.

—@Candace Lyle Hogan, August 11, 2011

## Moving Emails From Friends

POSTED BY XTREME DREAM TEAM ON AUG 13, 2011 IN BLOG | 3 COMMENTS



Photo by Christi Barli

As you know, Diana has changed my life (for the better) repeatedly over the years and continues to do so. Her ACTIONS are what inspires. We all have thoughts, dreams, fantasies of what we want, wish, hope for. Over and over again, Diana demonstrates that it's what you DO that matters.

I have been following Diana for more than 35 years and she continues to move me to try.

I regret that I could not be there this time to experience in person the monumental energy and determination that is Diana. Of course, everything about the swim, beginning with the conception of it is inspiring. Indeed, even Diana's CNN press conference afterward was amazing. Her resilience, her graciousness, her ongoing desire to uplift in the face of her disappointment taught me much.

As I write this I am moved to tears.

I owe Diana more than I can ever say.

Love and thanks,

Margie

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## On the Wings of Angels

POSTED BY XTREME DREAM TEAM ON AUG 13, 2011 IN BLOG, SLIDER | 9 COMMENTS



Photo by Christi Barli

Not even 12 hours after Diana Nyad put a stop to her swim, she returned to the blue marina where some of her many training hours over the last two years had begun and ended. She arrived on time as she always does, smiling and personable as usual, for a press conference. It was Tuesday, August 9, and she hadn't slept since early Sunday morning. Instead, she had traveled 56 miles through the Florida Straits, turning her arms over some 90,480 times in the Gulf Stream for almost 30 of those hours, turning her head to breathe half that many times. At the Tuesday, August 9, 2011, 6pm press conference in Key West, here is some of what she said:

"Friday and Saturday there was turbulence on the coast, and my adrenalin was flowing hard when Bonnie [head swim handler and best friend] and I arrived in Havana on Saturday. There were morning to late afternoon winds onshore Sunday, but by the 7:45 pm start time, the water was like glass and warm. It was as if the angels had come down and calmed the waters with their wings. I looked out from our balcony in Cuba an hour before and said to Bonnie, It's our time, let's go.

"After an hour and a half in the water, the winds came up and it wasn't swimming weather at all, but you've just got to accept that on long distance swims. Wind and weather are relatively unpredictable and they vary, so I decided not to focus on the conditions and just put my head down and stroked through it; maybe it would get better.

"I began training last year after not swimming for 30 years and by the end of the summer, I had a torn tendon in my left shoulder. It became such a worry by January that I learned to alter my stroke entirely to compensate for it. Babying my left shoulder became such a preoccupation that, one day, I looked at the inside of my car and thought, My car looks like a cryogenics lab! I never thought to worry about the right shoulder.

"In the third hour of the swim when the waves that had started did not seem to be subsiding, my frame of mind was to power through them: I extended my right arm underwater for a big pull and felt something wrong, a strain and then excruciating pain. I tried to find a catch-place, some way to use my

right shoulder to push the water back without pain but there wasn't any way to work it without a sharp, wincing pain on every stroke. So I thought, Maybe the waves will subside and make it better, but that never happened. Then I thought, Here I am, I'm going to have to live with it and I've done it before, let's go.

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kind I do use was the one thing I'd forgotten to bring in my swim bag, but there was a bottle of that kind within reach so I was given a pill from it. (I learned later that this was around the 18th hour of the swim, at 1:30 Monday afternoon.) Within 20 minutes, I started wheezing, short of breath. Now, I've never had an asthma attack while swimming, though I have once before on dry land. The seizure of it during this swim lasted 11 hours.

"I swim at 52 strokes per minute with or without pain and move at about 2 mph through the water consistently. We have always understood that the way to keep forward progress, without losing too much to the current or drifting back when I tread water during feedings and hydrating, was to train till we got smooth and fast. So from training, Bonnie and I had it down—every hour and a half, we were working those feedings in under two minutes. We had also attended to the hydration issue that came up last year, after my 24-hour training swim. A friend invented this ingenious pulley system where I could keep moving while drinking water through a tube every 45 minutes. So the waves didn't matter to me; the pain didn't matter. We were making progress and we knew I could make it from Cuba to Florida.

"I had the training and the desire; so perfectly prepared with the right people and such unswerving dedication in and around me. The one thing that had never occurred to me was that I might have a severe allergic response to something in an over-the-counter pill I thought I knew. We tried everything during those 11 hours to counteract it but I just couldn't breathe. Once the asthma hit till it was over, I couldn't go more than 30 strokes without turning over to gasp for enough air to be able to do 30 more strokes again. If you can't breathe in enough oxygen to fuel your muscles, they stop working; everything goes into distress. Bonnie Stoll and Dr. Michael Broder from the escort boat, the Voyager, tried everything, but it was no use. I would roll over and try to hold my place till I could get enough air but my lungs were in distress, my muscles in distress, they need oxygen. I guess the jellyfish stings didn't help either, but I wasn't even thinking of them.

"It got so that I couldn't do even a minute of swimming before I was oxygen depleted. So then it became 30 seconds of swimming and three minutes of floating on my back, and that's a desperate cycle. Turbulent seas and my shoulders couldn't stop me, we knew that. But if I couldn't move forward more of the time than I had to spend treading water to rest and gasp for air...

"As we moved into the night, Bonnie even convinced me to do the breaststroke, and when the currents cooperated I was going 3mph, and I thought, I don't care if it takes 80, 90 hours, I can do this! With Bonnie from the boat, at each one of those 200 strokes, every stroke, yelling, You're doing it, Diana, you're doing it, I started to believe again, We're going to make it. But I was hyperventilating. Eleven hours of asthma had just depleted my reserves. Finally, I went over to the boat and said, Let's get real. I asked David, my navigator, how many more hours to Key West and he said, about 30, and I knew: my mind was willing but in this state of seizure my body couldn't make it. Unlike in 1978, this time I made the decision to stop the swim. I knew there was nothing more that could be done.

"I also know that those 29 hours I spent were more difficult than any 60 hours I would have done with my lungs functioning normally and not compromised. I know that I wanted to make this swim not for the athletic record but to remind myself to live, not just exist. There is a shocking view of the finality of life that comes to you as you get older, and I want my response to it to be, This is my time to live all of it. I want to live the way that we all know is within our grasp, if we so choose: to be the greatest parent, to create the work we're capable of, to support each other in our dreams, to be the greatest friend. I want to rise to that commitment every day, to find the best self I am, to go to sleep every night feeling I've fully lived the day.

"I grieve that this swim didn't let me show what a great swimmer I am. But I was the best person I could be yesterday."

—Diana Nyad

[1,776 captures](#) by [Steve Hogan](#), reporting on August 9, 2011, 6pm press conference after Cuba swim)  
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## Xtreme Dreaming: An Unfolding Story

POSTED BY XTREME DREAM TEAM ON AUG 11, 2011 IN BLOG, SLIDER | 2 COMMENTS



Candace congratulates Diana

Photo by Christi Barli

Note from Diana's friend Candace: Can this story be told in a day, by a blog, by an article in a newspaper or magazine? I think not. Perhaps the universe was created in an instant, in a big bang, but it's taken us fallible humans ever since to work out what it means to live life. That story is ongoing. And so will be this blog, as Diana Nyad's extreme dreaming unfolds, revealing itself over the coming days and weeks and no doubt months. It's ongoing, and so is Diana's life, I am so thankful to be able to say.

And just so you know, she's already begun to do what she set out to do originally, "live life to its fullest." For her over the hours since she came out of the water, that has meant what? Sleeping? Resting? Eating all those things she denied herself while in training? Oh no, not our Diana. She'd been promising the party for her crew (and for the friends scheduled to arrive in the middle for the celebration at the end, who hopped on a plane even after they heard it was over) and a party was what they were going to get. In fact, two already—the first on the evening of the day her swim dream ended—the second, last night. Thus the delay in bringing you into it, but believe me, though her for-now substitute blogger (me) has had to take a day or two to catch her breath, Diana herself has been speaking to you since her head came out of the water—through the CNN cameras, over phone interviews, in press conferences. Some of what she has to say will come soon today in the next blog, part of that press conference, word for word.

And then another blog later on tonight after that. And then the next day and the next. Diana lives large, and so have many of us had an opportunity to do through being a part of her dream, as well as otherwise. But be prepared. If this story has a beginning, a middle, and an end, you'll have to figure it out for yourself because it sure ain't gonna come that way to you from here. It's going to come in moments, in snapshots, from various angles and perspectives, unfolding. It will come together somehow, like the grandma's quilt that Diana Nyad threw off before jumping into the water.

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...se few days down in Key West

POSTED BY XTREME DREAM TEAM ON AUG 11, 2011 IN BLOG, SLIDER | 11 COMMENTS



Diana addresses her friends and family

Photo by Christi Barli

This has certainly been an intense few days down in Key West. As you well know, from being on the first Cuba swim so many years ago. Bonnie Stoll was a truly amazing trainer for Diana on this swim, and Candace was there by Diana's side, too, as she was on the Cuba swim with you.

Of course Diana is intensely disappointed, and grieving the end of this particular dream effort. But as she put it "It's a disappointment, but not a failure." And certainly, from reading her facebook and twitter messages by the thousands from all over the world, it is clear that, almost unanimously, her feat ( she swam nearly 55 miles over 29 hours in open water) is seen as an heroic effort that has inspired her many thousands of followers to think about how each one of them might make a commitment to some special effort in their own lives.

That has been her message from the beginning of this dream, and clearly, that message has gotten across. By the way, did you know that Hero was a woman? She was the one Leander swam to every night across the Hellespont in Greek mythology. She was his muse and inspiration. Sound like anyone

you know?

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afternoon, but many of Diana's friends and crew are still there, probably until the

weekend. Some were going out to swim with dolphins this afternoon, including Diana. I hope they all go out and dance themselves silly in one of the fabulous bars in Key West, before they leave. Diana is the best dancer I know. We had a ball in the 70's dancing our way around every bar in Manhattan.

And I hope there will be a big party for her, perhaps back in LA around her birthday on the 22nd? I wish I could be there, too.

As we all know, there is nothing like spending time with this incredible woman to make you feel alive and inspired to do great things yourself, not to mention royally entertained by all the wonderful stories, brilliantly told. She pulled off a truly bravura performance of that function at her thank you gathering for her crew and friends last night. Just 18 hours after that amazing swim. Diana is truly a force of nature.

CNN will be broadcasting a 1 hour special about the swim and hopefully focusing on Diana's larger message of inspiration to the world, on Sept 17th. Sanjay Gupta is doing the story. CNN was on the boat for the entire swim. And I am sure all of you will hear from Diana very soon.

The Heroic journey is a long one, with many twists and turns, and it is far from over for Diana. Let's each of us recommit ourselves to taking that journey seriously in our own lives, in honor of her effort this week. That's the message she wants to send, as she said at her press conference after the swim. I'm starting today.

Onward, Jean

Jean Golden

## Diana's been an inspiration to so many

POSTED BY XTREME DREAM TEAM ON AUG 9, 2011 IN BLOG | 10 COMMENTS



Photo by Christi Barli

Back in the late 70s it must have been, I used to swim laps at the old Women's Y on Eighth Avenue in the 40s, maybe, in NYC. I was a scuba diver then and tried to keep in shape that way. This picture was taken on my first ever dive in the Bahamas in 1969.

One Saturday morning, I was swimming along with my jet fins and mask and snorkel, and became aware of a body in the next lane passing me as though I were standing still! That was pretty unusual, because I always swam with my fins and I was pretty quick.

When I got out of the pool, I asked one of the women who that was, and she said, Diana Nyad. I had heard your name around that time. . . maybe it was because of your swim around Manhattan. Then I

went to shower, and you were there next to me. You paid me a great compliment which I have never forgotten.

Over the years since, I have seen you doing Olympics commentary and always remember that day.

[1,776 captures](#)ishes,  
3 Jul 2010 - 17 Apr 2026  
Marjorie Wheaton

## Lessons from the swim, toward the future (8-9-11; 9AM)

POSTED BY XTREME DREAM TEAM ON AUG 9, 2011 IN BLOG, SLIDER | 87 COMMENTS



Photo by Christi Barli

As the crew is motoring in to shore, we get a call: "This story is being covered worldwide, Sydney, Montreal, everywhere— Google just has 1400 articles about the end of the swim alone. Mostly it's about how much Diana's inspiring people." Of course, it is. Especially for the age group Diana intended to give heart to the most, she has succeeded. You think of success and failure differently after living a lifetime of it. How we define success or failure changes as we become mature and wiser and more accomplished. This was always about an attempt. This was always about the importance of reaching beyond your grasp. Of course, a shore to shore success would have been nice—it was what Diana wanted, passionately. There's no sugar coating for that; her disappointment is real. But for her contemporaries whom she so specifically addressed, this was always about the attempt, this was always about reach...about the courage to risk wanting anything passionately again—or maybe even for the first time.

Life teaches us that youthful success is easy. Success is incredibly accessible if you define it conveniently, as those second-rate compromises we settle for every day or as choosing safety over challenging yourself. Diana looked us in the eye and said with love but without equivocation, No, you can do better. You know you can. Get up, wake up, you can do whatever you set your mind to, or at least you can try. Diana wouldn't let us get away with using age as a rationalization for being tentative about challenging ourselves. This swim was about setting the bar low for an entire generation. It was about the importance of reaching beyond our grasp, whatever the day, whatever the outcome, about the courage to risk engaging in life with our best selves.

Candace Lyle Hogan and Elaine Lafferty

“Currents will be blowing us toward the Bahamas, so all night we’ll be trying to pinch our way north.”-Navigator

David

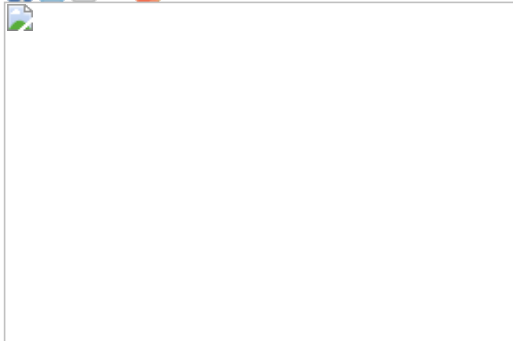
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About Yesterday morning (aug6) On Her Way to Cuba We found ourselves coming and going at the Key West airport at exactly the same time Sat. morning, in separate buildings. Diana Nyad and head swim handler Bonnie Stoll, on their way to Cuba at last, had already passed through security. Over the cell phone, Diana guided me along a row of taxis—“go outside, see the one with the sign on top, look through the window to your left of that.” Through the window, I could see Diana, her sharply pressed tailored shorts below a snappy team t-shirt 103 Nyad Xtreme Dream, laughing and waving delightedly, looking just like she did more than 30 years ago. Fearless, on her way adventuring again, she is in her element, feeling good. Suddenly Bonnie came into the frame, waving and laughing, too, all those hours and miles of training behind them, the grueling grind, Diana slogging through the water, Bonnie attending to her from the boat, all done. Many hundreds of miles already done in training—Diana has swum thousands in her career—but the crucial and final ones just ahead: 103 miles from Cuba to Florida. It’s inconceivable, unless you allow the possibility that what the human mind can accomplish may be limitless. Diana has had a lifetime of pushing her body beyond its seeming capacity—of extending her reach beyond its grasp—of looking fear in the face and laughing. And there she is as wide-eyed and confident as I saw her in 1978 when she swam 42 hours through the Gulf Stream, still going strong, when we had to force her from the water, our navigator having gone so far off course in bad weather that she could have stroked 100 more hours and never reached land. She wanted to go on then. And here she is, going on with it now.

This time, we’re all hoping, it will be different. This time, she intends to go from shore to shore to greet those faces at the end, waving and laughing and loving such a dramatic reminder that people can and do accomplish what seems impossible.

Through the airport window I see them hopping up and down like a couple of ten year olds. It’s a beautiful sight. That is the age of entitlement for a girl, the world open before her, she can do anything and all good things are possible. Looking happy, excited, on their way at last, Diana and Bonnie are reminding us there’s a 10 year old alive in us still, and she can be gleeful even in the face of the challenges ahead.

– Candace Lyle Hogan

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Xtreme Dream: For Diana Nyad's representation

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