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Diana Nyad's blog: The final days before the swim



Diana Nyad

Jul 20, 2011

July 28, 2011: Diana's deep moment

This is a deep moment in my life. This swim will take my body into unknown territory. Nobody has ever known how the muscular, cardiovascular, digestive and endurance systems will respond after two and a half days, maybe even three, of continuous swimming in the sea.

I must have confidence that I've done everything possible over these past two years to make my body believe it can withstand the duress it's about to experience. But I have no doubt that this crossing will be the ultimate test of will. The mind, its desire quotient, its refusal to entertain defeat: This is what will guide me to The Other Shore. I am confident. And I am afraid.

In these days, hours, before I step off that shore in Havana, with Florida a long, long 103-plus miles away, I am now thoroughly enmeshed in the imagination of what my body, my spirit, will undergo. Yes, I have experience in these extreme feats. Memories of enduring the long, arduous hours from the Bahamas to Florida, way back in 1979. The 42 hours of my first attempt from Cuba in 1978. But this swim will be much longer. Much, much longer.

Eccentric as it may sound, my adrenaline is starting to surge with the challenge of keeping my mind focused, engaged through all the hours of pressing forward with the strongest stroke I can produce. This is MY TIME. My time to rely on strong shoulders. My time to be propelled by an iron will. My time to be my best self, in every fathomable regard.

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Courtesy of Christi Barli

Gulf Stream here and now to

they're here, 86-87 degrees, with the occasional reading of 88, hypothermia is one of the pending factors that could possibly mean doom for the swim.

During the first half, maybe a day and half, dehydration will be the issue. Drinking water, electrolytes, any kinds of fluids as often as possible, is our goal. During that second half, even very warm water is going to start to make me shiver. You're immersed in a liquid more than 10 degrees below your body temperature. Imagine taking a hot bath. You're rested. You're enjoying a magazine. As soon as the temp goes below 98.6, you reach to add more hot water. Well what if you were losing huge numbers of calories, your metabolic rate were dropping. After some 30, 35, 40 hours of vigorous activity, you're going to feel cold.

We marathon swimmers are not allowed to wear neoprene wetsuits, as are triathletes. No flotation devices whatsoever. So I'm experimenting with thin rash guards and sprinter's long suits. They are cumbersome. I'd have to be at a desperate point to put this stuff on. These materials aren't even designed for warmth. But at least, if only for psychological comfort, I'll feel I've got something to cover the skin if I'm feeling cold.

July 12, 2011: This pole has changed my life



Courtesy of Christi Barli

This pole has changed my life. Our crew designed it because I can't, for the life of me, track the boat and stay right on its course hour after hour.

My mind drifts and then I drift far away from the boat. I have got to stay right on course if I want to make this 103 miles, so this pole gets lowered horizontally out from the bow. Then a white sailcloth streamer trails out

as we start moving, about 18 feet from the starboard side, about five-feet underwater. I swim right on top of that streamer, almost like following a pool lane line below.

At night they switch out the white cloth for a bright red streamer of LED lights. For the first time in my marathon-swimming career, I am swimming exactly parallel to the boat, not hundreds of yards out to sea. Genius!!!

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I'm just about to enter the ocean



Christi Barli

Havana to try to swim some 60 non-stop hours, you might ask, "Then nine-hours must seem like child's play at this point, right?" Never. Yes, my muscles are in great shape now. Nine hours does not make me sore or wipe me out to the point of utter exhaustion anymore. But nine hours,

every time, without exception, commands my respect, my concentration and a need to treat it with focus and desire.

Those nine hours can't be taken lightly. They don't go by so quickly. I have to get into a mindset to settle in, not look forward too much as to where the sun is or how much time has passed why aren't we done yet? It's a tough sport, this extreme version of marathon swimming. I am very proud to have put in these two years of discipline.

I'd have to check my journal and count the hours but, aside from the hundreds of hours in the pool, the multiple ocean swims of eight, nine, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 and 15 hours have required my best self, every single one of them. There are not many more to go. The countdown is ON!!

July 7, 2011: Jellyfish stings



Christi Barli

Just the other day, I was stung in this seaweed mass. It wasn't a dangerous Portuguese Man of War, whose sting can cause nausea, convulsions, even hallucinations, but the sting was sharp and made me stop for two or so minutes to grit my teeth until the pain subsided. Most jellyfish sting the surface of the skin. It's not pleasant to be stung, but it's not

dangerous. The Man of War, on the other hand, is dangerous. They actually send a venom into the central nervous system. They're trying to paralyze a fish. We human beings are too large to go all the way to paralysis from the amount of venom they emit, but we can be terribly sick from a Man of War

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just in case I am experiencing some level of shock from a Man of War

can't get out of the water to be treated. Nor can any of the team hold me up in the water. But I can approach the boat and be very close to them as they treat me for whatever I'm going through.