

Give The Gift of Inspiration



SEP 13

Posted 6:39pm

Independent Observer Report: Roger McVeigh



Nyad Swim Observer's Report Submitted by Roger McVeigh Date Submitted: September 12, 2013

Swimmer:
Diana Nyad

Pilot/Operations Chief:
John Berry

Navigation Chief:
John Bartlett

Date and Location of Swim:

Start Time: Saturday, August 31, 2013 at approximately 9 am est (8:58 am) from seawall near ocean entrance to Marina Hemingway (gps coordinates recorded by McVeigh from Voyager's captains mounted gps was North 23 degrees 5.327 and West 8 degrees 30.604)

Currents were very light and seas calm at start and water temperature was 84 degrees (per thermometer placed in water near handlers)

Finish Time: Monday, September 2, 2013 just before 2 pm est at Smather's Beach Key West, FL

Swim Time: 52 hours, 54 minutes, and 18.6 seconds (recorded both on iPhone stop watch held by Hinkle and backed up by McVeigh's timex ironman style watch)

Thursday/Friday, August 29/30, 2013

After arriving at about 5 pm, we departed for Havana from Oceanside Marina in Key West at 7:45 pm Thursday, August 29, 2013, expecting it to take about 12 to 14 hours to make the

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crossing. Janet Hinkle and I were assigned to the support boat "Dreams Come True" along with 3 captains and 4 individuals on the Social Media Team. At 12:36 pm on Friday, August 30, 2013, we had reached the outermost buoy of the channel entrance into Customs and Marina Hemingway and radioed in announcing our arrival. We were instructed to continue to Buoy #7 and tie up at the dock. At 12:50 pm we were greeted by customs officials at the dock. We were instructed to stay on board while we cleared customs. After several hours of waiting and having 3 to 6 different officials board our vessel, we cleared customs at 2:48 pm. We were

scheduled for 4 pm, immediately followed by a team meeting at 5 pm. We disembarked at 3:28 pm, just shy of 24 hours since we boarded the boat in Key West.

At 5:05 pm, the press conference ended and seemed to go well. Diana was excellent as usual. She spoke mostly in Spanish with a translator there to help her with certain words.

At 5:13 pm, team meeting began. Diana kicked off the meeting indicating that this is not a solo sport, but this swim is a team effort. She indicated the swim could take 3 days and 3 nights. John Bartlett spoke briefly about the great weather and current conditions forecasted and indicated we would be travelling sideways and that the currents have a little northern direction rather than the normal eastern push.

After the meeting concluded, we were instructed by Chief of Operations, John Berry, that the boats should be ready to head out at 6 am sharp. We were also told that the adjacent hotel/resort had several rooms available (\$68 per single and \$100 per double with food and beverages included) if anyone wanted to pay their own way and sleep in a bed instead of on the boat. I took the opportunity to check into a room (and take a shower) as it had been difficult to sleep in the last 24 hours during the boat ride across. Several groups decided to travel by taxi into Havana (about a 30 min ride) while I elected to stay put with several others, eat at the hotel and get a good night's rest before a 4:30 am wake up. Did have the opportunity to spend a little time with John Berry, D Brady, John Bartlett, and Bonnie Stoll getting a tour of Voyager and where it would be best for me to stand or sit.

Saturday, August 31, 2013

We boarded and arrived with our sister boats at Customs at about 6 am. They cleared us for departure fairly quickly, but we had to wait for our flares to be returned. Apparently, there was some confusion with respect to Diana and Bonnie's visas because they were not on board. After that was cleared up we shoved off at 7:55 am; I took the first observer shift, so I quickly moved from "Dreams Come True" to "Voyager" before we left shoved off from customs. After clearing Cuba customs and immigration at 7:55 am, McVeigh took first observer shift by boarding Voyager, the primary escort boat, and travelling to swim start

McVeigh and Hinkle started with a 3 hour shift plan, which was revised to longer shifts by mutual agreement

Actual Observer Shifts were modified as necessary along the way with 11 total shifts allowing one of the two observers to ride on Voyager watching the swim for the entire duration (either Hinkle or McVeigh were on Voyager during the duration of the trip). Approximate shift times were as follows:

Shift 1: McVeigh	Saturday, August 31, 2013	9 am to 12 noon
Shift 2: Hinkle	Saturday, August 31, 2013	12 noon to 3 pm
Shift 3: McVeigh	Saturday, August 31, 2013	3 pm to 6 pm
Shift 4: Hinkle	Saturday, August 31, 2013	6 pm to 9 pm

Observers decided to adjust shifts to 5 hours beginning with Shift 5 to allow observers more time to sleep/rest

Shift 5: McVeigh	Saturday, August 31, 2013	9 pm to 2 am
Shift 6: Hinkle	Sunday, September 1, 2013	2 am to 7 am
Shift 7: McVeigh	Sunday, September 1, 2013	7 am to 12 noon
Shift 8: Hinkle	Sunday, September 1, 2013	12 noon to 5pm
Shift 9: McVeigh	Sunday, September 1, 2013	5 pm to 11 pm

Shift 9/10 times adjusted to accommodate safety decision to limit dinghy activity during night; shift time for Shift 9 actually adjusted because of squall protocol that was triggered right before 11 pm shift change; McVeigh's shift 9 time actually didn't end until approximately 1:26 am Monday, September 2, 2013, after storms had cleared and it was safe to transport observers in dinghy

Shift 10: Hinkle	Sunday, September 1, 2013	11 pm to 7 am
Shift 11: McVeigh	Monday, September 2, 2013	7 am to finish

Shift 1 (McVeigh):

Gns at start North 23 degrees 5.327 West 8 degrees 30.604

I quickly learned how to pull gps data from gps instrument mounted in front of captain's cockpit, although I was told that this was not quite as accurate as gps unit used by John Bartlett

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About this capture

held the streamer underwater Diana used for swim direction

Bartlett indicated water conditions are very favorable at this time. Normal west to east gulf stream current can reverse itself closer to shore, but Bartlett just measured this potential counter current and said it was extremely light

2 gps trackers on board to help relay our position to Diana's website

8:40 am The crew put out the swim boom; we can now see a small gathering of media on shore along the seawall at the mouth of the channel. About 15 to 20 individuals appear to have gathered and an American flag appears.

Note that no white lights will be allowed on Voyager at night as ,apparently, they could potentially attract the dangerous box jellyfish and it can also impair good night vision. Only dull red or amber lights are allowed on board, which made it challenging to write and record notes at night

8:54 am Now a Cuban flag is also flying and the crowd on shore erupts in cheers Don M and Darlene are the first kayakers on duty for the kayak escort

Dawn B taking picture from a dinghy close to the start jumping off point 8:58:46 am Diana is in the water, swimming now, water is flat calm

Bonnie, chief handler rode on a jet ski with some local spectators and was ferried over to Voyager

9:04 am she is swimming at 56 strokes per minute, a little more than normal according to Bartlett, but probably because of adrenalin

First water break will be at 45 minutes

Note that I reference hydration breaks and feedings throughout my notes on a random basis, but not with the intention of logging all hydration breaks and feedings

We were told that the Commodore from Marina Hemingway gave Diana and Bonnie a ride to start point

Diana wearing a 2 color royal blue and black suit with a royal blue swim cap

She appears to be swimming strong, kayakers in good position, and shark diver goes in the water with fins and snorkel about 5 yards behind Diana

Starting to feel a little eastern breeze as we move farther from land

Captain is instructed to follow a compass heading of 345, quickly adjusted to 340

9:25 am. Diana swimming strong, about 55 strokes per minute and about 1.9 mph; initial food/hydration breaks would be set at 45 minutes

Very little current slight wind from the east

Noted the boat was dragging a large yellow funnel on port side, about 30" in diameter, apparently to allow the boat to maintain a slow enough speed

Bartlett indicates that when he gives me readings, it will generally be in mph (speed) and statutory miles (distance)

Dr Angel Y, jellyfish expert came aboard at Bonnie's request; Bonnie suggested that Angel stay on board for first two hours of the swim in case of any jellyfish sightings

First drink/hydration stop in about 5 minutes at 9:45 am

Protocol would be for kayakers to have one bottle of water, so every other stop would be water from kayakers, then she would come to side of boat for every other feeding/hydration break

Shark diver in the water on regular scouting mission Darlene told Diana that she looks like poetry in motion

9:48 am John Berry showed me how to access an ipad that had water depths, it looks like a reading of 350 which is apparently in fathoms so it would be about 2100 feet

Gps North 23 degrees 6.783 West 82 degrees 30.695

Water still appears flat calm, Diana seems to be kicking stronger, Dr. Angel is passing time by cross stitching

10:04 am she is now swimming at 53 strokes per minute

Dr. Angel just spent about 60 seconds in the water looking for jellyfish, nothing seen, water was very clear

10:18 am Diana stopped for a brief minute to adjust her goggles and nose clip

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1 am Shark diver in the water

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About this capture

10:24 am Winds from the east/northeast at 5 mph according to Bartlett's hand held wind gauge

One blow of the whistle means time for feeding, handlers wear rubber gloves for feeding

Kayakers did first rotation, two kayakers on duty at a time with one relieved every 1.5 hours, each kayak shift was 3 hours

Pauline made Diana a peanut butter sandwich

Liquids taken both in a water bottle, some contain water and some contain a brown mixture that includes a sports drink and other ingredients

Other liquids taken in via bladder from a camelback 5

A little Vaseline or other type of lubricant applied under her arms and around her neck for chafing, careful that none gets on her goggles

She also took in 2 pieces of Clif Shot Bloks 10:47 am 55 strokes per minute

11:02 am winds still light from the east (7 mph), she is swimming strong, heading is now 330 on the compass, approximately 3.45 miles from starting point

Slight white capping ahead, also a slight change in water color, could mean a stronger current
11:20 am Diana took a bottle of water from kayaker Buco, she drank about 3/4 of bottle

Note to social media team, shark divers have a camera to take pictures and Don, kayaker has go pro camera mounted on his cap

11:26 am gps coordinates North 23 degrees 8.925 and West 82 degrees 31.175, water temperature 86 degrees

11:32 am water depth at 655 (feet or fathoms?), 86 degrees water temperature

11:42 am she is now swimming about 52 strokes per minute, looks like initial adrenalin is wearing off

Shift relief arrives

Shift 2 (Hinkle)

Shift 3 (McVeigh):

Back for 3 pm to 6 pm shift

Depth of 818 feet (fathoms) at 3:02 pm

3:03 pm gps coordinates North 23 degrees 12.938 West 82 degrees 31.409, water temperature at 86 degrees, swimming at 53 strokes per minute, course heading 320, wind speed at 8.6 mph east/northeast

3:11 pm winds out of the east/northeast at 7.5 knots or 8.6 mph 3:15 pm 5 minute whistle warning to next feeding

3:20 pm feeding, banana with peanut butter, strawberry colored can drink, liquid from camelback bladder, Vaseline on the lips, 2 pieces of Clif Shot Bloks, compass heading is 320

3:51 pm travelling at 1.4 mph now, and 9.3 statutory miles off starting point, gps North 23 degrees 13.541 West 82 degrees 31.199, whistle for water break

4:52 pm winds lightened up a bit at 6.5 knots

4:53 pm gps North 23 degrees 13.522 West 82 degrees 31.199

5:14 pm looks like weather moving in from the South should be here in about 15 minutes

Preparing for potential storm/squall protocol

5:24 pm gps coordinates North 23 degrees 15.136 West 82 degrees 30.745, weather approaching from south, but never reached us, though squall protocol was discussed

5:33 pm diver going in water

5:38 pm Diana swimming at about 50 strokes per minute. Compass heading is now 320

5:52 pm Diana stopping for hydration, Diana says she is starting to get minor stings every couple of seconds from no-seeum jellyfish, handlers say she can put on suit at anytime, she says she will wait a few minutes

Shift ends with 6 pm arrival of Janet

Shift 4 (Hinkle)

Shift 5 (McVeigh):

Wow, its dark and 9 pm shift has started, seems pretty dicey getting in and out of the dinghy on the dark ocean

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About this capture

Night swimming is tough

Very easy for Diana to drift away from boat, kayakers have a tough job keeping her close to Voyager

Winds shifted from southeast, makes it hard for the boat to stay with her with winds pushing

Compass heading is 300

Large lightning strike to the northeast, seems to be about 10 miles away

9:33 pm gps coordinates North 23 degrees 17.924 West 82 degrees 29.356, current heading is 300, stroke count has dropped to 46 strokes per minutes, hard to swim in suit

10:07 pm gps North 23 degrees 20.184 West 82 degrees 28.179 10:22 pm feeding at side of boat, very quick and efficient

10:55 pm gps coordinates North 23 degrees 20.848 West 82 degrees 27.606, water temperature 86 degrees, winds from the south, 2 to 3 feet swells, stroke count down to 45 strokes per minute

11:01 pm 5 minute whistle till hydration stop Staying on 300 compass heading

11:32 pm stroke count is 49, gps is North 23 degrees 21.536 West 82 degrees 27.212 11:51 stop for feeding/hydration

Diana stops to ask whether Candace and the social media team is paying attention

12 midnight gps coordinates North 23 degrees 21.66 West 82 degrees 26.91, currently have gone 19.32 statutory miles (about 16.8 nautical miles) in about 15 hours at cumulative speed of 1.29 mph, seems as if current is turning slightly north going with us

12:22 am swimming at 48 strokes per minute

12:24 am water break, everything is good, going to 30 minute hydration breaks till daylight, now 43 strokes per minute, though it is hard to count in the dark

Relieved by Janet at 1:51 am

Shift 6 (Hinkle)

Shift 7 (McVeigh):

Shift started at 6:51 am

She has upset stomach, swells are 3 to 4 feet, course change to 290 compass heading, the jf mask is not positioned correctly and seems to be hurting her

Shark divers wearing shark shields that repel sharks, but need to be recharged Angel leaving boat along with shark diver team

Changing course to 290 compass heading

6:30 am gps position North 23 degrees 30.9 West 82 degrees 18.2, 2.5 knot current, 21.5 hours in, covered 33.23 statutory miles at cumulative average speed of 1.56 mph, 85 degrees water temperature, Diana feeling great, now at 46 strokes per minute

Changing course to 280 heading

7:33 am removing suit and mask, doctor's pulse reading was 66, eating pasta now, holding down food feeling great, stroke count is 50 strokes per minute, course change by 10 degrees to 270 degrees

Lights and streamer were coming apart, used feeding stop to tape them back together, now on a 45 minute break schedule

7:40 am she is swimming again

Depth is 5400 feet and she is swimming at 50 strokes per minute

She is drinking a combination of liquids including Jamba Juice?, coca cola and water

She also has a liquid concoction that includes hammer sustained energy, ginger, honey and electrolytes

Course change 10 degrees to 270 compass heading

8:26 am quick bite to eat

8:33 am everything is going well, next stop in 30 minutes at 24 hours, swimming at 53 strokes per minute

8:39 am gps coordinates North 23 degrees 34.759 West 82 degrees 14.532, 4.5 knot wind from southeast, boat pointed west, but travelling in a northeast direction, water temperature at 85 degrees, 2 to 4 foot swells

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About this capture

8:46 am swimming at 53 strokes per minute, 2 to 4 foot swells, apparently caused by current moving across undulation on the bottom

8:58 am in 20 minutes all boats are going to rally a cheer

Course is now 270, gps North 23 degrees 35.239 West 82 degrees 14.109

Winds at 4 to 8 knots out of south/southeast, seas are now less than 1 foot

She is in good spirits, but has lots of chafing, enjoyed eating eggs and drinking coca cola

9:27 am her bicep muscles are burning, heading still at 270 degrees essentially due west, gps coordinates North 23 degrees 35.968 West 82 degrees 13.436, 51 strokes per minute

9:30 am changed heading 10 degrees to 260

9 am reading was we have travelled 38.18 statutory miles at average speed of 1.6 mph 51 strokes per minute at 9:40 am

Bruce was captain from 6 am till about 9:44 am on Voyager, Nancy in relief

2 to 4 foot swells, 8 knot wind out of the southeast

10 am North 23 degrees 36.731 West 82 degrees 12.754, at 10 am feeding she says, **"everybody get ready, its Roger McVeigh's birthday and we are going to sing"** (how she ever knew it was my birthday, I'm not sure, but very surprised to say the least, could be my best birthday ever)

Bartlett estimates Monday evening landing, several hours after darkness

She is now swimming at 49 strokes per minute, 86 degrees water temperature

Just before 11 am Bartlett was recharting course, saying we have big decision on course direction Course heading is now 260, water break in 20 minutes

11:18 am She was scheduled for water only stop, but needs food, doctors were being consulted about pain in corner of her mouth and inside of her mouth; doctors had brought xylocaine(?), but she decided against it

11:24 am gps coordinates North 23 degrees 39.696 West 82 degrees 9.952, holding course steady at 260 Dee is driving Voyager next for a 2 hour shift

Holding course at 260

12 pm noon feeding, breaks set at 40 minutes for now

Janet arrives for shift change, Roger to come back to relieve her at 5 pm

Shift 8 (Hinkle)

Shift 9 (McVeigh):

Shift started at 5 pm

She is swimming at 52 strokes per minute, compass heading at 330, 30 minutes between hydration/feeding stops

5:10 pm 10 minutes till next feeding, 30-35 minutes in between feedings now

We have travelled 70.15 statutory miles, approximately 37 miles from Oceanside Marina, water temperature at 86 degrees, compass heading is 330, first stroke count after putting suit on was 52 strokes per minute

Wind direction has changed and is now coming from east/southeast Gps North 24 degrees 2.488 West 81 degrees 55.609

Next feeding is at 8:20 pm, now swimming at 50 strokes per minute

About 10:45 pm storms arrived in a hurry, delaying our planned 11 pm shift change; rains and strong winds were on us in the blink of an eye and we went into storm protocol; suddenly all the shark divers were on board via the zodiac, then all of the shark divers entered the water forming a circle around Diana (could see small circle of red lights); Diana and the shark divers drifted ahead of Voyager and all of the support boats spread out putting some distance between the boats

Storms lasted a couple of hours and then we started getting back to normal Janet arrived at about 1:26 am to relieve me

Shift 10 (Hinkle)

Shift 11 (McVeigh):

McVeigh's last shift started at 7:16 am Monday, September 2, 2013. Excitement is building.

11:39 am approximately 52 strokes per minute; discussed landing protocol and need for her to water without being touched, according to email received from Steve

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About this capture

Lots of satellite phone call interviews this morning for Bonnie with various media

Time undetermined, 4.23 miles away, gps coordinates North 24 degrees 28.199, West 81 degrees 47.622

With less than one mile to beach, McVeigh rode to beach in dinghy in accordance with finish protocol

Conclusion:

During all my shifts and time aboard Voyager (approximately 31.5 hours of her 53 hours of swim time), I never saw Diana receive any assistance in floating or in propelling forward, never used any snorkel or fins, she never left the water (always swimming forward or treading water), and she never hung on or touched any boat or kayak or person (with the exception of doctors taking her pulse and handlers/Dr. Angel applying sting stopper and lubricant to relieve chafing)

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