



AUG 18 Posted 6:42pm

Arriving in Havana



photo: Christ Barli

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Saturday August 17, 2012

Arriving in Havana on Friday (the following report was written before the start was moved up earlier)

From all points north, south, east, and west—like an energetic convergence—Diana Nyad's Extreme Dream team met before dawn at an Oceanside dock in Key West Friday morning to board boats to Cuba, arriving at 7pm in Havana. The swimmer herself and head handler Bonnie Stoll flew into Havana Friday morning arriving around 10. Saturday at 1pm Diana will lead a team meeting at the Hemingway Marina in Havana in anticipation of an early Sunday morning start of her epic journey from Cuba to Florida.

This will be Diana's fourth attempt to swim the 103 mile distance, estimated to take at the very minimum 60 hours of continuous stroking from shore to shore. Her first attempt was more than 30 years ago. In 1978, bad weather and navigational difficulties stopped that swim after the world champion marathoner had fought wind and waves for more than 42 hours and 76 miles through the Gulf Stream. Diana is hoping for calm weather conditions this time, of course, a prerequisite in making such an unprecedented feat even possible.

In 1979, on her 30th birthday, Diana did accomplish the farthest swim in history, which was her original goal. That swim was from the Bahamas to Florida, without a shark cage through shark-infested waters. Three decades later, as her 60th birthday approached, Diana thought of her dream to swim from Cuba to Florida again, and after not swimming for all that intervening time, she dove into the water again to train for it.

Trained and ready in 2010, she waited for proper weather conditions, which never came, throughout that summer. But in 2011, she tried twice. The first attempt was thwarted by an asthma attack in the water, which had never happened to her before. Depleted after fighting it for hours, she stopped after 29 hours. But just a few weeks later, she tried again. The waters were calm, white-tipped sharks were seen around her but didn't bother her, but she was stung only two hours into the swim by a box jellyfish. Still, she kept on swimming. Openwater swimming expert Steve Munatones says that no marathon swimmer has ever stayed in the water after being stung by a Portuguese Man of War, a less dangerous jellyfish, let alone by the

often-fatal box jellyfish, yet Diana kept on.

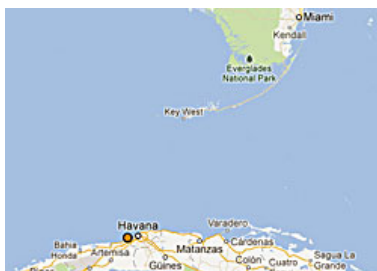
Many hours later, at the same dawn hour, Diana was stung again. Such toxins are cumulative and Diana had to be pulled from the water for resuscitation. After a couple hours of recovery against the advice of her crew, she got back in. By then, however, weather conditions had worsened and, because of the physical trauma from multiple stings, she wasn't making her progress. She decided then to end the swim, after 41 hours and six minutes in the water.

[5 captures](#)

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For this swim on Sunday, in addition to her usual, grueling training, Diana has put much effort into making preparations for encounters with jellyfish. Along with shark experts, a jellyfish expert will be on board her escort vessel throughout the swim, along with a medical team.

--Candace Hogan, reporting from Havana



Visit DianaNyad.com to view the swim in real time!

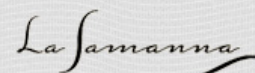
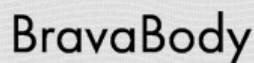


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