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

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Navigator John Bartlett

Posted by Xtreme Dream Team on Oct 1, 2011 in Blog, Slider | 8 comments



Dear Diana, OPS Team, Everyone,

How long does it really take for mere words to appropriately fit into placement among the vivid images, the deepest of emotions remaining with all the whys, what ifs, and the lack of closure on different levels? The answer, un-specifically, is longer! We will have to accept this as I try to slow the swirl and grasp out for some of those words to share.

I, as navigator, had a unique connection to Diana. As she propelled herself through the water, her stroke count, and the minutes that were spent while she slowed to hydrate, or stopped to eat, became numbers. There were other numbers. The speed of the Gulf Stream current flow, which she had to swim

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Diana's Tweets



- Hey Dreamers its almost time for the webinar, have you registered already? <http://ow.ly/6M69Y> about 11 hours ago from HootSuite
- Dont miss the webinar today at 11am. <http://ow.ly/6M62t> Register now before its too late! about 13 hours ago from HootSuite
- Open Water Heroes Aren't Like In The Movies, written by @openwatersource <http://ow.ly/6M8gh> Dont forget to register for the webinar! 01:05:02 AM October 04, 2011 from HootSuite
- Hope you all can take some time and join us tomorrow to hear about everything that went into pursuing my Xtreme Dream. <http://ow.ly/6M86A> 11:05:01 PM October 03, 2011 from HootSuite
- @abajofidelx100 Gracias por su motivación y apoyo 08:12:19 PM

across. Her powerful and incredibly consistent progress forward, generally northward had to combine geometrically with the movement of the current, generally eastward, into a course line that would get her to the Florida Keys. I could feel her strength, through my numbers!

October 03, 2011 from [HootSuite](#) in reply to [AbajoFidelX100](#)

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Being on a different boat than the Voyager escort to do the navigation, I was visually separated from Diana when the first collision with the jellyfish occurred. The water was completely calm at the time, but I could hear the screaming, the crying out in pain, and after moving in closer, see the scramble of activity on Voyager. With updates via the radio, and the awareness now that Diana had been seriously stung (burned), I looked at the city lights of Havana, and thought that this is just the beginning, 2 hrs. into a 60 hr swim, Diana is nearly starting this event injured. We must go back, recuperate, and start again another day. I said nothing. Waited.

Incredibly she was able to start swimming again. I got back to my numbers, moved a waypoint on the G.P.S. to compensate for the hours drifting, and tried to shake off the undermining feeling of depression. I again got absorbed, watching closely for the 1.3 knots of speed through the water. Now in calculating, based on training swims, a 1.3 nautical mile gain per hour allowed 10 minutes of stoppage time, an 84% efficiency. I believed that the Florida shore would be obtainable with a 1.1 gain, with a full 15 minutes of stoppage per hour, a 75% efficiency, but barely, and with 10 or so additional hrs. swimming. Our positions for the remainder of the night were still pretty good, but Diana had slowed.

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We all watched, the next day, in awe as she progressed, injured, but seemingly undaunted. I even suggested to Bonnie that she make usage of the stoppage time I had calculated into the navigation, to aid in Diana's regeneration. Was regeneration the right word? What process were we really seeing happening? Then evening came again, and the unthinkable happened.

The 2nd collision with the jellyfish happened at nearly the same relative time of early evening, and this time, I was onboard Voyager, wholly unprepared for what I saw. The sounds, human sounds, the screams from Diana, were all too familiar, but this time, not echoing over the calm water, but present, and combined now with the many voices of an incredible team to her rescue. This time, being outside Cuba's 12 mile limit, we also had our two emergency/sports medical guys as well. This time, it was decided that Diana had to be pulled out of the water for treatment. I simply held a light and was consciously thinking about that there was no panic and under the circumstances, impressive unity, although my gut was wrenching and my hands were shaking. At one moment, Diana was taking shots in her thighs, being wiped off with hot towels, having cream rubbed on her face, and being sprayed with a neutralizing liquid, simultaneously, while Bonnie held the oxygen mask over Diana's mouth shouting "breathe" "breathe". Diana lay there quivering and moaning. It was devastating to be fearing – at that moment – what I was fearing, and it was for more than just the event. Finally, she was said to be stabilized, and I was asked to head back up current to the spot marked on the G.P.S. where Diana had been taken out of the water. I remember thinking "why would we be doing that?" We surely can't be even considering....And I said it out loud to a couple of my teammates, "you are not considering putting that human being back in the water!" I looked at Cliff, the doctor, and just said "doctor?", and gesturing toward the trainer/handlers who were saying "she wants to go back in"; he said he'd never seen anything like this.

Again, I went back to my boat and my numbers. Diana was now resting 23 minutes an hr. well over the 15 minutes that got her into trouble in my worst case nav. scenarios, down to a 62% efficiency, or a mere .93 nautical mile gain to the north, per hr., while the current at that time swept us at 3 ½ to the east. Even at that, if she could keep up this pace for another 37 1/2 hrs., and if the weather would hold, and if there were no more jellyfish collisions during either of the next two nights, there was a slim chance. Not good enough odds in my book, but Diana's decision. If even possible, at least a total 77 hr. swim!

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But it was done, and she swam on, and my eyes are watering up right now as I recount what I saw. Then I had to go back to my numbers. Diana swam the rest of the night, taking long breaks to breathe and keep enough oxygen available to her muscles. I put in a waypoint for 8 in the morning, but through the night it was apparent we were getting set past it. About 8 I got called over to voyager for an evaluation on our progress. Everyone thought that with me standing there taking notes, and Diana probably noticing, that she was pushing a little harder, knowing what was going on. I timed the minutes of crawl, breaststroke, and floating on her back to breathe. I conferred with Doctor Cliff as to what his experience had taught him about an athlete's ability to dig deep and recuperate. He told me that what he was seeing was off the scale, and far in excess of anything he'd seen.



I went back to Voyager, talked it over, and shared my info with the team members present, the doctor and observer, Steve. I was instructed then, that I must just tell Diana the truth. Then began the toughest minutes of my life. Everyone knew how incredibly hard she had worked for this, how badly she wanted to achieve this, how much she had suffered in the last 44 hrs. It was more than evident in her herculean effort. I called her over, told her what I saw in the plotting. Diana asked Bonnie what she thought. Steve told her actually how frequently ocean swimmers are taken out by jellyfish these days. Dr. Cliff told her that if she was stung severely one more time, that it would be life threatening, and would have to be the end. I pointed out that she would be out there one more night and part of the next, with the previous

collisions having been 1 each night. I think she said she didn't want to be stung again, but that might have been in my head, or maybe it was my heart from where the tears were welling up.

John Bartlett

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8 Comments



jean golden

It's the heart of a champion.

October 1, 2011

Reply



Ginger

It is hard to read this without tears. A very moving account of just how hard the task was and just how massive the effort. I am impressed by the science and the attention to detail. But there is no way to measure Diana's heart.

October 1, 2011

Reply



Jen

just so amazing and incredible... this narrative says it all... What a special group of people you all are – Champions, each one of you in your own way!

October 1, 2011

Reply



Don McCumber

John -

Your words brought me back to those moments. Very difficult to read, even now... The shock of the sounds... the emotional highs & lows... you tell the story very well. I wasn't in my kayak with Diana during either event, but came on very soon after, each time, and saw the pain, the difficulty breathing... the struggle... and the incredible effort. It's hard to be objective in the midst of the emotions, but you were able to look at the numbers, extrapolate all possibilities, and explain it clearly to everyone. Way to Nyad up, buddy.

Don McCumber

October 1, 2011

Reply



Name

Fool in the water, genius on board.

October 2, 2011

Reply



Gifford

October 2, 2011

John, the difficult calls are usually the correct ones. Next year?

Reply

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Ken Taranto

October 3, 2011

Your comments capture the incredible courage of a woman facing challenges that threatened her very life. Thank you for sharing them.

Reply



Pete Habel

October 4, 2011

Kudos to you for a great recount of the events surrounding the swim. Thank you for the detail that only a person who was directly involved can state.

Reply

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is more than a swimmer.
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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- In My Own Words
- Diana reflects on her swim, 1 week later
- Navigator John Bartlett
- Wayne Lewin: Driver for Voyager I

- Judy W on Kayaker Katie Leigh
- Susan Kay Gilbert on Diana
- later
- Nancy Curran on Kayaker Katie Leigh
- woosterburd on Kayaker Katie Leigh
- Pete Habel on Bonnie's Reflections

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Xtreme Dream. For Diana Nyad's representation please contact Pam Derderian