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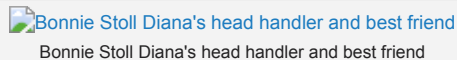
Diana Nyad Xtreme Dream 103 miles. Cuba to Florida. Summer 2011

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Bonnie's Reflections – Lead Handler/Head Trainer

Posted by Xtreme Dream Team on Aug 19, 2011 in Blog | 6 comments



Bonnie Stoll Diana's head handler and best friend

Photos by Christi Barli

Bonnie Stoll, head handler on the Xtreme Dream swim, spent most of the 29 hours of the swim on the escort boat Voyager next to me. I asked her to tell us what it's like out there on the low platform closest to the swimmer, so she wrote this on the plane when we were flying back from Florida to California.

As my focus was solely on Diana it is only now that I can now reflect on my thoughts, feelings and memories of our attempt to swim from Cuba to Florida. Diana and I have been a team for the past 18 months on every training swim and every decision. This was our journey.

I have no idea of real time.

I know Diana jumped in the water at 7:45 pm.

That was the last time, until the finish, that I was aware of real time.

All that matters to me (and my team of 3 other handlers-Liza, Jon and Jesse),

Is 45 minutes and 90 minutes. I have a chrono-watch around my wrist that tells me 45 minutes is up and it is now time for Diana to have a 'water only' stoppage. My whistle toots, Diana glances my way and is pointed toward the pulley where the Camelbak has been sent out on a pulley so she can continue to swim straight ahead-after sipping water for about 30 seconds, drinks between 10 and 16 ounces, and then continues on her way.. This stoppage is purely for hydration-nothing else.

45 minutes later (90 minutes), it is time for Diana to come in towards the boat for a feeding. Whistle blows-in she comes. Her goggles are moved off her eyes up on to her cap. The right side of her cap gets folded up above her ear, as this is also time for a check in, "how are you feeling?," "You look really strong", How is the shoulder- She needs to hear. I hand Diana an ice cube so that she can ice the shoulder as she is drinking our concoction made up of electrolytes, protein powder, fat, calories, a sports drink and of course, the obligatory water. She drinks between 24-35 ounces through another Camelbak hose She may also have 6-8 ounces of goo gel. At other stoppages she may have a few bites of bread, peanut butter and/or banana. These stoppages can take 2-4 minutes. It is Diana's only

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Diana's Tweets



- @saragepp Aww thank you and I am so excited for dedication to surfboarding, You will do great! Aim high and never loose sight of your goals! [about 8 hours ago](#) from [HootSuite](#) in reply to [saragepp](#)
- @lavishpearlock Thank you. Cant wait to hear about your upcoming adventures :) [about 9 hours ago](#) from [HootSuite](#) in reply to [lavishpearlock](#)
- @jrexaggrations Thank you! [about 9 hours ago](#) from [HootSuite](#) in reply to [JRExaggrations](#)
- @worldtravelmom YES! So happy for you. Thank you so much for watching the documentary! Have a favorite part? [about 9 hours ago](#) from [HootSuite](#) in reply to [WorldTravelMom](#)
- To my followers and supporters~Live ur dreams & Get high on everyday life! Thank U all 4 watching my @CNNbrk documentary <http://ow.ly/6yIP0> [about 10 hours ago](#) from [HootSuite](#)

break and the only time she is capable of any human interaction. The cap comes down over the ear, the goggles get a spit of her own saliva, and back to covering her eyes. We put a Shot Blok or a piece of dried pineapple in her mouth to cut down on the swelling that the salt water is sure to cause. And she's off...back to do what she does best-swims and swims some more....

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are two more wrist-watches in my 'area'. They are permanently wrapped around the ladder and

the wiring from the engine. One watch is used only for running time. This watch was much more important during our training swims as Diana has never gotten out of the water until her pre determined number of hours was accomplished. Not one minute earlier..12, 13, 14 15 and 18 hour training swims-not one minute early!

The third wrist-watch is a back up for my chrono watch-My job is to take care of Diana both emotionally and nutritionally and I aim to do my job.



6 Comments



jean golden

August 19, 2011

That total focus is what we all counted on, Bonnie. We knew you would never take your eyes off her. And we are so grateful for that. Thank you for all that you do for Diana, and please don't forget to take care of yourself, too. Sending love, Jean

Reply



stu morris

August 20, 2011

bonnie, you've always been a phenominal motivator. diana an inspiration to all. life's images captured by art. interesting observations in your photo above. your eyes-determined to achieve the goals you set. the sign above your head, 'bonsai'- "...trained to an artistic shape by special methods.." [your name barely precedes it in the dictionary]. we are all family, the team you and diana make over the past 30+ years, speaks vouldumes. 'bonsai bonnie'(has a nice ring to it).

Reply



Joanne

August 20, 2011

Bonnie, it must have been tremendously difficult for you to watch Diana in such pain and taking such chances with her health and safety. You are BOTH very tough gals. My sincere admiration....

Reply



Must be nice to have friends that

August 22, 2011

Must be nice to have friends that supported you with your dream.Wish I had someone who believed in me. THAN YOU FOR BEING SUCH A STRONG LADY.

Reply



Robin Porter

August 22, 2011

Must be nice to have friends that supported you with your dream. Wish I had

someone who believed in me. THAN YOU FOR BEING SUCH A STRONG LADY.

Sorry don't forgot to tell Bonnie thank you too.

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Alex de Cordoba

August 25, 2011

Bonnie, I have so much respect and admiration for you. This is an amazing insight into the experience from your perspective.

Reply

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Diana Nyad's Xtreme Dream

"Diana is more than a swimmer. She's a beacon 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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