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

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Soul Searching

Posted by Xtreme Dream Team on Aug 3, 2011 in Blog | 20 comments



Photo by Christi Barli

Back in February & March, I had to soul-search. Had to ask myself if I had within what it would take to train again another year, once the visas and hurricanes dashed the Xtreme Dream 2010. The long, sometimes painful, always grueling hours present an undeniable challenge to both body and spirit. I had paced myself through 2010. Gotten in the best possible shape. Never shaved even a minute off any training session, no matter how I was hurting. The pride and joy that came with being ready by summer 2010 was palpable. The 24-hour training swim on July 10-11, 2010, was proof that I had done everything right to make the big crossing from Cuba. Then came the difficulties with government visas. When they finally cleared, it was Labor Day. Then came an unprecedented string of Atlantic hurricanes. Then came the end of October and the water temps fell to the point that 2010 was over. The Dream was not to be. I tried hard to rise above the disappointment, to remind myself that people, many of you I am sure, deal with true tragedies every day, that preparing again for this Dream should seem a

Archives

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Diana's Tweets



- As of 10:20 pm the flotilla is continuing on in warm, calm, windless seas. Onward! [about 9 hours ago](#) from [HootSuite](#)
- "It was scary" said Stoll. "But Diana is happy that this happened early while she is still at her strongest." [about 9 hours ago](#) from [HootSuite](#)
- After an hour and a half of treading water Diana began to rehydrate and swim her freestyle stroke. [about 9 hours ago](#) from [HootSuite](#)
- Rose was also stung numerous times. The crew got Diana's swimsuit changed and put a new suit on with a shirt covering her. [about 9 hours ago](#) from [HootSuite](#)
- Chief handler Bonnie Stoll said, "Diana was stung along both arms the side of her body and her face." Jonathan Rose,

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privilege, not a burden. But I can tell you that November and December were tough months for me. I felt lost. After all that preparation, all that strength of commitment, involving all those good people, working day and night on all the myriad of expedition organization details, raising all the expense funds. I was home with nothing to show for it all? By the holidays, I made a turn. It wasn't nothing we were all left with. The effort itself was a triumph. I suppose it's much as when a couple calls it quits after many years. The first reaction is the whole marriage was a defeat, a waste of precious time, to coin Bob Dylan's term. But some distance and time later, you remember what you gave, what you got, and it was time well spent after all.

I built my body. I gathered a Dream Team of friends and experts and we were in wonderful synch together throughout the process. There was a public, you, who were inspired and who in turn inspired me with all your writings.

By January, the spirit was back. But the shoulder was bad. With all the overtraining of 2010, I wound up with a torn tendon in the left shoulder. The pain was non-stop. Sleep was difficult. Swimming was out of the question. Even just kicking was painful, keeping the left arm stretched out in front. A top orthopedist in Los Angeles told me I'd "never do it without surgery, the tear was considerable". Yet there was no time for surgery and recuperation and training, all within six months before summer. Another orthopedist in New York, Dr. Jo Hannafin of Hospital for Special Surgery, had a more optimistic diagnosis. She felt the shoulder tendon tear was more minor and the good news was that it had not widened from July's MRI to November's. Her physical therapist, Theresa Chaia, gave me a series of exercises which I have done every day since. Then my PT in LA, Karen Joubert, looked me in the eye and said I had nothing to worry about, the shoulder was going to come through like a soldier. And she convinced me to ice it many, many times a day. I now seem like a traveling cryogenics lab. I have ice bags in the car, next to the computer, next to the bed, in the gym. I may ice as many as 12 hours a day, 20 minutes at a time. AND, I met Ous Meloulli, the current world record holder at 1500 meters who has a tear in the exact same place as I do in his shoulder. He also doesn't want to risk surgery before his 2012 Dream Olympics. Ous showed me how to change my stroke, not easy to teach an old dog new tricks, after all these years. But I now dip that left shoulder and extend under water, instead of above.

By February, the shoulder was feeling stronger, able to be tested. But what about the mind? Could I put in all those long, torturous hours....again? I started with 8, then 9, then 10, then 11, then 12, then 13, then 14, then 15. Then multiples of all of those. Countless hours. All in the ocean. By mid-June, after the last long ocean swim at my training camp in St Maarten, I cried hard. It was a tough two years. But I persisted. And now I was in even better shape than 2010.

Well, I moved to Key West mid-June. Ready. Confident. The whole team gathering, getting their ends ready as well. June passed. We knew July would bring the flat seas that we are told are common for the Florida Straits mid-summer. Yet July came and went. Unexpected winds. A few calm days but only one or two at a time. Not a long enough stretch for what I need.

Now it's August. And there is no doubt that this, the waiting, the worrying is far, far harder than any of the long two years of training. I have no control over the weather and logic dictates that I need to let go and just accept whatever the daily forecast brings. But human nature is not logical and thus I do worry. I worry that we will head into last year's scenario again and the hurricanes will begin their stream of activity earlier than usual. I can't sleep. But I need to sleep.

Bonnie is here to keep me up, keep me busy. My close friends check in with words of wisdom. It's easy to find strength when you have control, difficult when you don't. We are waiting. Waiting. Waiting.

- Diana



20 Comments



Mary Kelley Richard

August 3, 2011

Ms Nyad, I can only imagine the waiting is misery. I want you to know that you are so much loved & admired. So many in our generation find you an inspiring marvel. I am just about your same age. I was a swimmer when I was young. I love

Navy Dive school while in the Coast Guard & thought about you often, as there was only one woman there & none from Coast Guard had ever done it. Whatever happens, we are all with you in Spirit. Given all you must consider, I understandably back you. I pray for weather, a good swim & your good health. It is not only your crew but the world who truly love you, whatever happens.

Reply



Cindy Vincent

August 3, 2011

Diana, I am a bartender at the Southernmost Beach Cafe. I have had the pleasure of waiting on you and talking to you a couple of times. I have been following your updates every day, wishing you well and hoping you can perform your dream soon. I also bought your long sleeve t-shirt. Love it! I am greatly inspired by your dedication and motivation. Thank you!

Reply



Direct Loan Consolidation

August 15, 2011

I like this site given and it has given me some sort of commitment to succeed for some reason, so keep up the good work.

Reply



Cat Rokitski

August 3, 2011

If the weather cooperates or not, you are still an amazing icon of inspiration and strength to many! Best wishes towards completing your dream and gratitude for inspiring so many other dreams!

Reply



Jerome Jewell

August 3, 2011

Diana:

I can only imagine the torment of the waiting, after all you've put yourself through. Perhaps this is one of those times in life when you have to just open your arms and "let go of it", for just a bit. When the time is right it will be right. Until then, since the weather is completely beyond your control, maybe you should focus on how to turn the delay into something positive. (Easy for me to say.)

Maybe this is an opportunity to spend some quality relationship time, or to take a brief physical rest from the exhausting training regimen.

i.e- When was the last time you and Bonnie just went out on a boat and

WEREN'T thinking about The Xtreme Dream? Just relaxing and thinking about....hmmm...nothing???

You're already fine-tuned...maybe a short rest period would actually be rejuvenating...physically and emotionally...a chance to de-compress momentarily before going 103 percent

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And don't worry about the rest of us, "the supporters in spirit". We were "with you" last week, last month and last year, and we'll be rooting for you whether it's next week, next month or next year. But it's not our ass on the line here. It's yours and yours alone. Just take care of Diana.

Hang in there.

Jerome

Reply



Sticks

August 3, 2011

your dream team in key west, your dream team of facebook friends, your dream team of friends thousands and thousands strong around the world wait with and support you and the xtreme dream. words don't give enough meaning to the inspiration you give all of us every day.

Reply



Alex Brooks

August 3, 2011

Of course there is no formula for success except, perhaps, an unconditional acceptance of life and what it brings. ~Arthur Rubenstein

Diana~ I've been a fan of yours for many years. (I used to train with Bonnie.) I thought you might enjoy the Rubenstein quote above. The thing is? Once you fully accept that you have no control over any of "it" you will start to sleep better. Do whatever you can do to get there. Let go and let someone else worry about it! You just do what you can do which is all you must do and embrace the mystery of every single bit of what's to come. Wishing and praying for your Highest Good. Keep Well! Alex

Reply



JoAnn Szott

August 3, 2011

Of course its so hard to wait, and you do not have any control over the weather. But you want to swim and that will happen. Just do not take any chances that will ruin your dream. All your Fans are with you Diana and supporting you. Thank you for keeping us posted. ONE OF YOUR FAVORITE FANS – JoAnn Szott/Bradenton, Florida.

Reply



Deedeewittenberg

August 3, 2011

Just remember my friend we all have disappointments but discouragement is a choice. It is a mind thing I feel. U have the gift of patience and commitmentwhich

is far greater than discouragement. U can fight off all those firey darts and look for the peace that surpasses all understanding. U go girl. U have already given all of us the greatest gift of all just loving us. Deedee wittenberg

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Reply



Jo-Anne Green

August 4, 2011

Dear Diana,

As far as I'm concerned, you've already succeeded. The fact that you have overcome adversity (injuries, depression, etc.) and lived with such discipline, strength, and determination makes you my hero (now I have two: you and Nelson Mandela). And that you're surrounded by so many loving and supportive people is testament to who you are. Whether the swim happens or not, whether you make it all of the way or not, I hope you'll hold on to that. As many people wiser than I have said, it's the journey, not the end that matters.

Jo

Reply



Anna

August 4, 2011

I have heard you speak about this endeavor several times this summer, and it's quite an inspiration. Mind-altering inspirational. I always knew that it was possible to be an accomplished athlete no matter the age, as my grandmother roll-modeled. She played volleyball well into her 80's (she failed to mention when she became a "senior" and played with the regular league for far too long before switching and taking the new team to the Senior Olympics). However, it took your story for me to realize that that I didn't really understand the value of my grandmother's accomplishments.

I imagine the wait must be torture – it's not something one normally trains for, usually having a firm deadline for a competition or the like rather than a seemingly amorphous "when the weather's right." That's part of the inspiration for me though – that you stick to the goal even when everything seems to go wrong. You will do this. When, no one knows. But you will. And when you do, it will be so much more of an accomplishment than it would have been had you done this last year, not to mention when you were younger.

Reply



Dear Diana,

August 4, 2011

Hang in there. I think the anticipation alone would drive me to madness.

Does a "window of opportunity" really extend into October or will you be exposing yourself to further hardships that late in the season? Sometimes the bravest souls turn back just below the peak of Everest.

Michael A.

Reply



Mollie

August 4, 2011

Diana, I've been following your journey since reading about you in the NY Times. I

just completed my first Olympic triathlon, and continue to be inspired by your hard work and dedication. That's where the real work is, and you've done it and stuck

to it. Best of luck!

Reply

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Tuppy Dougherty

August 4, 2011

love the shoulder instructions – starting right now. Yes a swimmer, yes OUR AGE, yes following you every minute! Of course you are in control, no fair shadow boxing! We all believe and want to tell you all of the lovely supporting comments said above, over and over again. But we really just want to be right there with you at the FINISH. Don't cast another thought at Mother Nature. She is simply warming up the crowd for your elite performance. So deep breath, on with the routine, the window will open. Bon chance from south Louisiana.

Reply



Margie

August 5, 2011

I imagine that there are few who can truly understand how difficult the waiting is after so many, many months of training and planing and training. Please know you have touched so many people who like me have been inspired by your pursuit of this dream. When I feel most down about my everyday struggle to find work, I think of what you've accomplished with your unrelenting tenacity and it keeps me going another day.

I wish all of us could use our love and support to calm the seas and make the waiting end. (Who knows it couldn't hurt.)

No matter what happens, please know that you have inspired so many and made a positive impact on our lives.

Thank you Diana!

Reply



Direct Loan Consolidation

August 15, 2011

I like this info presented and it has given me some sort of desire to have success for some reason, so thanks.

Reply



Sue McHugh

August 8, 2011

Have never forgotten the champion of The Crusaders 1993-1994 – once again you are making us proud and proud to know you – especially those of us in our 60s. We made our mark in decade and you are inspiring us to make our marks in these 60s of ours as well. Thank you and Godspeed – be safe and well – many of us feel as if we are in the waters with you!!

Reply

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Jen Winter

August 9, 2011

I am neither an athlete or swimmer, but I am 61 and am inspired by your story of

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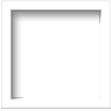


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never giving up on your dreams. Finally a woman who captures the emotions of an aging woman in our society. I pray you achieve success in your extreme swim. But you should know that you have already won by inspiring many boomers who felt as you did. We are all rooting for you and ourselves as we dust off our dreams that slipped away many years ago and follow your lead.

Thank you, Jen.

Reply



Erica

August 9, 2011

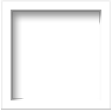
Ironically I found out about you and your journey after you left the water today. However, I don't find it any less inspiring. What you say in this entry really struck a cord with me.

I got injured last year on my last training session for my first marathon. Nobody (including me, in a sense) could see the hours I had invested and effort it took to reach that point. Not to mention, I couldn't run for almost a year afterward. While my feat was obviously a tiny fraction of yours, I wish I had read your post back then.

You're right-- it's the grueling hours put in before the big day and overcoming the myriad of setbacks up to the event that make it truly inspirational.

Thank you for being a strong female role model who me and my (future) children can really look up to!

Reply



Lisa

August 10, 2011

Thank you for inspiring us! You are an amazing woman and your drive to attempt at the "dream" is an inspiration in and of itself. Accomplishing the swim would have been so awesome and I have to admit my heart ached for you when I heard you had to pull out. That being said, as someone who has fallen short on my own dreams, I know I am a better person for having tried.

All the best to you as you continue to inspire and succeed in making new dreams come true!

Reply

Leave a Comment

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Mail (will not be published)

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About this capture

Your message...

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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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- Barbara on The Swim Has Started! She's in at 6:05:08
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- Anthony on Swimming at Night

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