

2014 Open Water Swim Season Summary
 Delia G. Perez – DVUSMS Open Water Representative

The 2014 open water season offered more than 70 open water swims at the shore and nearby states. Three new swim options for this season featured the First Annual Brigantine Beach Ocean 2K Swim held in the morning in Brigantine, NJ (USA Swimming) on July 12th 2014; the Sea Isle Beach Patrol One Mile Ocean Swim, reactivated after an almost 20-year hiatus, and held in the early evening on July 12th 2014; and the Swim the Battle of Turtle Gut Inlet (South Jersey Triathlon Club) held in Wildwood Crest, NJ, held on July 26th 2014.

May 25th 2014 offered good season opener swims with the very competitive Navesink Swims (1.2 or 2.4 miles) in the Navesink River with tri-athletes heavily represented.

June 8th 2014 brought in warm weather with 72 degree water and good swimming conditions for the annual Great Chesapeake Bay Swims (1 or 4.4 miles) finishing nearby Hemmingway's restaurant in Maryland. The One Mile Bay Swim starts and ends at the finish line for the 4.4 Mile Bay Swim and conditions varied for both swims. The One Mile Swim course directed swimmers into the wind for the first leg of choppy water plus exhaust fumes from safety boats. Then the second leg turns sideways to the wind and then turn into the final leg with the wind at our backs. Because the One Mile Swim course is held in more shallow water, the water temperature hovers between 72 and 78 degrees, and wetsuit swimmers were overheating by the time they turned into the final leg of the course. A total of 440 swimmers completed the One Mile Bay Challenge Swim. The 4.4 Mile Swim offered a fairly consistent 72 degree water temperature throughout most of the course with the wind behind the swimmers. But as the faster swimmers approached the 3-mile point in the course, the wind came about and the swimmers were now swimming into the wind and very choppy water. These choppy conditions remained for the rest of the race and impeded progress while many swimmers were also seasick. A total of 606 swimmers completed the 4.4 Great Chesapeake Bay Swim. Race results for the last five years indicate that between 79 and 97 percent of swimmers finished the Great Chesapeake Bay Swim. The lowest completion rate of the race occurred in 1991 and 1992, when a strong ebb current in the main channel beneath the Bay Bridge led to fewer than 20 percent of swimmers finishing the event. Results can be found at www.linmark.com



Robert Matysek

Tragically, Robert Matysek was pulled from the water during the Great Chesapeake Bay Swim about 45 minutes after the start of the race. It was his 20th time participating in the race. Matysek was in distress and unresponsive when a county dive team arrived and pulled him from the water. Emergency personnel began CPR and rushed him to shore by boat. He was in cardiac arrest when he was transported to Anne Arundel Medical Center in Annapolis and was pronounced dead shortly after arriving. Matysek is the third swimmer in the history of the event who has died after going into cardiac arrest. Several swimmers were pulled from the water throughout the event by volunteers on boats and personal watercraft. Water temperatures were in the mid-70s, but swimmers had to deal with recurring swells and choppy conditions. Numerous emergency personnel were in the water and in helicopters above to monitor the swimmers' progress.

Matysek's brother, Jim, and sister-in-law, Anna Lea, are staff members at the USMS headquarters in Sarasota, Florida. The 4.4 Mile swim is an annual event for the Matykek family. The surviving brothers, Jim, and Tom, and their nephew Carl, all finished the race. According to Anna Lea Matykek, "the family was in shock." She also mentioned that the worst part is that "Jim swam past the boats and saw them doing CPR on someone. Of course he didn't know at the time that it was his brother."

June 8th 2014 and the Escape the Cape Triathlon includes a swim from the Cape May Ferry. The race director, Steve DelMonte <stephen@delmosports.com> permits participants to either swim & bike or swim & run, in lieu of completing the full triathlon. Unfortunately, this is the second year that the event was scheduled for the same date as the annual Great Chesapeake Bay Swim. Steve organized added another South Jersey triathlon event in Atlantic City on Sunday, September 14th 2014, allowing swimmers to participate in the swim-only portion. Swimmers were allowed to swim a one-mile course after the final wave of triathletes finished swimming. First-hand reports from open water swimmers about this race mentioned confusion at the finish for the "swimmers only" race, where they were directed to two different finishing locations – causing confusion and varying finishing conditions. Steve appreciated the feedback and is already working on fixing and improving next year's race.

June 15th 2014 and the informal Donny Fund Swim (pick your own distance) held in Pleasantville, New Jersey, is a fundraiser for children with cancer. This informal swim allows athletes to enjoy a training swim on their own while supporting a worthy cause with a hot breakfast at the Pleasantville Yacht Club.

June 27th 2014 and a pleasant evening for the half mile swim and the one mile Independence Day Swim in Beesley's Point, New Jersey (at the sea-doo beach location across from the Tuckahoe Inn. This year, race director, Liz Casey, plotted a new box course to direct swimmers out towards the bridge, then turn towards the "cooling tower" at the power plant, turn again towards the start and finish back at the starting point on the beach for the half mile swim. The One Mile Swim required two loops around the course. Due to a strong incoming tide, the race organizers selected a "box course" in an attempt to minimize swimming against the incoming tide. By the time the one mile swim was scheduled to begin, the tide slackened but many swimmers over-swam the course in an attempt to avoid swimming into too much current. The saving grace for the evening was swimming in very comfortable 77-degree water. That evening, 45 swimmers finished the half mile swim and 83 swimmers completed the one mile swim. Results found at www.lmsports.com

June 28th 2014 Bridge-to-Bridge Swims in the back bay of Atlantic City were held in warm water (mid-70s and not too much choppy waves either). There was a little bit of a tidal pull on an outgoing tide for the 2K Swim. The 5K swim went off first and followed the traditional out and back course to just shy of the Dorset Avenue Bridge and back. There was much excitement with a "crazy close finish" between the top three swimmers in the 5K Swim – they swam side-by-side all the way from the Albany Avenue Bridge back to the A.C. crew boathouse finishing less than tenths of a second apart from each other (male swimmers ages 17, 16, & 13 in finishing order in 59 plus minutes). Traditionally, there's not too much tide close to the Dorset Avenue Bridge, but it gets stronger as you move away from there.

The 2K race went off around noon. It followed an out-and-back course toward Fenton Island and the Atlantic City Expressway and back (even though one never really sees Fenton Island). It was either under water or off to the side of the course. The race directors wanted the swimmers to keep the buoys on their left shoulder, and they had a trailing tide on the way out (but were out of the channel where the favorable current was strongest) but then were closer to the channel (deeper water) for the unfavorable fight against the tide on the way back. It wasn't completely horrible, but it would have made sense to redirect the course as a right shoulder swim. Then the swimmers had to swim past the boathouse, and make a U-turn to enter the finish chute – and this is just a little psychologically annoying for any open water swimmer. After the final swim and after waiting for a half-hour after the last swimmers were in, the awards were yet to be tallied and presented to the top finishing

swimmers. Seasoned swimmers were frustrated with such a disorganized swim and award process. The Bridge-to-Bridge has become a USA Swimming event, populated with a lot of speedy young folk, and not too many of the older masters level swimmers. In the 2K Swim, there was a total of 89 finishers and of these, only 25 were masters level swimmers. In the 5K Swim, there were 46 finishers and in this event, there were 20 masters level swimmers, including Laurie Hug (age 49).

Race Director, Dimitar Petrov, has sanctioned the Bridge-to-Bridge Swims to attract more young pool swimmers and for this reason, he schedules the event based on the Middle Atlantic long course pool schedule. Historically, the Bridge-to-Bridge Swim was dominated by masters level swimmers but now the event is predominately populated by youth swim teams. The swim is now a Middle Atlantic Open Water Championship and is scheduled so as not to conflict with the Middle Atlantic schedule. The swims were scheduled for the morning after the evening Independence Day Bay Swim because June 28th was the only weekend without a pool meet. Due to the prolonged winter and cold water in the beginning of June, the race director scheduled the swims at the end of June after many youth teams expressed their concerns about swimming in cold water. For the 2015 Bridge-to-Bridge Swims, Dimitar plans to bid for 2015 EZ Championship with the possibility of scheduling a 10K Swim on Friday, the day before Bridge-to-Bridge Swim, based on discussions with the Middle Atlantic Open Water Committee.

July 12th 2014 and the long awaited reactivated Sea Isle City Beach Patrol One Mile Ocean Swim was held in the early evening. This swim went on hiatus almost 20 years ago when it was last held under extremely cold conditions. The ocean had been warm prior to the "frigid swim" but the day of the swim, the water temperature dipped into the mid-60s due to the west winds pushing the warm water out to sea and causing the cold water to surface along the coast. When it was time to begin the swim, the ocean water continued to chill and unbeknownst to anyone, the temperature had dipped to a very cold 54 degrees. Back then, open water swimmers didn't use wetsuits and were ready to tough out the chilly water conditions – but no one knew just how the ocean water temperature continued to drop throughout the afternoon. By the end of that historic frigid swim, 6 or 7 swimmers were taken to a local hospital and other swimmers were brought to the Sea Isle Beach Patrol to thaw out. That's when the SIBP decided to abandon their ocean swim indefinitely – they didn't need such liability problems.

Fortunately, the newly reactivated Sea Isle Beach Patrol One Mile Ocean Swim enjoyed a warm 90 degree summer day and 72 degree ocean water temperature. The swim attracted 98 swimmers and with their first such event in almost 20 years, awards were offered to 10 age groups starting at age 26 (instead of the usual 5 year groups that were limited to the younger swimmers), and unfortunately, the older masters level swimmers were limited to a cluster of 56 years and older award group ... so it goes. Hopefully, they'll improve the award criteria in time for the 2015 swim.

July 13th 2014 – Steelman Open Water 1.5 & 3 Mile Swims (www.steelmantriathlon.com)



Former OCBP lifeguard Bob Pugh (age 51 – Wyndmoor, PA) wins the 35th annual T. John Carey Masters One Mile Ocean Swim in 23:29 minutes!

July 19th 2014 and the Ocean City Masters Swim remains as another morning swim after changing from its original evening venue three years ago – annoying those of us who don't like morning swims! The 10 a.m. swim gave us chilly 67 degree water along with choppy seas conditions that dashed all hopes for a blissfully balmy swim that morning for 205 swimmers. Results can be found at www.lmsports.com

Also that morning before the start of the 2014 Ocean City Masters Swim, David Nahan, a writer and photographer with the Ocean City Sentinel newspaper, saw an intrepid group of masters level swimmers on the beach walking together to the start of the swim. He took a photograph and starting talking with us, and ended up with a story for the local paper. The article, For Friendly Competitors, It's All About Breakfast Afterwards (These friends, some who've been at Masters Swim since the beginning, are no slouches in the water), was published in the July 23rd 2014 edition of the Ocean city Sentinel. Delaware Valley United States Masters Swimming open water representative, Delia Perez, was one of the swimmers interviewed, and Nahan highlighted a quote from her about open water swims: "I was dragged out and thrown into the first one 28 seasons ago and have been coming back ever since. With a group of maniacs like this, why not? The best part is when we're done, we get something to eat and tell tall tales."



George Thieler (Somers Point, NJ), Marilyn Brahms (Swedesboro, NJ) Don Walsh (Spring Lake, NJ) David Hirsch (Cape May Court House, NJ), and Delia Perez (National Park, NJ) all swam in the 2014 Ocean City Masters Swim.

July 26th 2014 and the initiation of the first annual Battle of Turtle Gut Swim held in Wildwood Crest, New Jersey. The swim was supposed to consist of a one mile ocean swim course but it was shortened due to

drainage pipes along the beach area. Barbara Cresse is the race director for this 8 a.m. ocean swim and her family ancestors fought in the Battle of Turtle Gut during the Revolutionary War. The swim attracted 85 swimmers and was heavily promoted through the South Jersey Triathlon Club. The morning swim offered pleasant conditions and 73 degree ocean water. This inaugural event had was somewhat disorganized and the volunteers definitely need more coaching to better support the actual swim event. The swimmers were treated to water and oranges after the swim.

August 3rd 2013 and the 2nd Annual North Wildwood Ocean Challenge sponsored by the North Wildwood Lifeguard Benevolent Association held at 6 p.m. Race director, Bill Auty, is still working on getting "sea legs" for this evening event and turnout is increasing even with a schedule conflict on the same day as the 8 a.m. Mid Summer Lavallette Ocean Swim. One of the few remaining evening swims, the course is in the form of two apex triangles, each a half mile, with swimmers exiting and re-entering the ocean to swim the second half of the course.

According to Bill Auty, the August 2nd Ocean Challenge was blessed with surf. The unique course allows competitors to come in through the surf twice throughout the course. Body surfing skills and navigation expertise were also needed to negotiate the course. Along with the waves was a strong in shore current that was running to the south. Due to this current, most swimmers were swept past the first swim buoy and did an excellent job getting around the first swim marker. The top male and female finishers are brother and sister – Sean and Erin Regan. Sean attends West Point Academy and Erin attends Mount St. Mary's, and the Ocean Challenge had 96 swimmers who finished this race. The surf was rough with 1 to 3 foot waves and the wind was out of the north at 15 mph for this rough and tumble swim!

August 9th 2014 and the rescheduled 30th Annual Mid Summer Lavallette Ocean Swim was held at 8 a.m. that morning. The swim was postponed from the morning of August 2nd due to rough surf conditions. After a mile walk down the beach, the USA swimmers start first at 8 a.m. for the 11 to 18 year old swimmers – totaling 34 swimmers for the 1.2 Mile New Jersey Open Water Championship for young USA swimmers. The swim no longer offers a USMS division and is now limited to just two divisions for open championship and USA swimmers. At 8:20 a.m., the One Mile Open Championship started and 144 swimmers finished the race. There is a wetsuit division but only 15 participants swam with a wetsuit. At the finish, it was difficult getting out of the surf onto the beach due to the extreme slope filled with soft sand (plus tiny pebbles and broken shells) and swimmers kept falling without getting a solid footing to climb onto the beach. Swimmers can enjoy muffins and crumb cake and other goodies while waiting for the swim results.

August 9th 2014 and unfortunately, the Yates Swim that historically was held in the evening continues to go the way of the Ocean City Masters Swim with a 10 a.m. start again this year. The ocean was a wonderfully warm 75 degrees and swimming conditions were perfect – the waves along the course limited course sighting but gave a tiny push south along the course to the finish. At the final turn towards the beach, the waves gave the experienced swimmer great body surfing to the finish at the beach for this old "lifeguard style" course. There were a total of 68 swimmers who finished and back at the beach, the Atlantic City Lifeguards treated us to grilled hot dogs on the beach. Race director, John Malecki, mentioned that they are trying to work behind the scenes to hopefully return the Yates Swim race course back to the inlet where it used to finish in Gardiners Basin. Results will no longer be found at www.acbp.org due to the lack of a webmaster for the Atlantic City Beach Patrol website.



At the beach in Atlantic City near the Yates Swim race course.

August 17th 2014 and the Captain Turner Ocean Swim was held at 9 a.m. in Longport, New Jersey. Approximately 175 swimmers participated in the ½ mile swim and 20 children, less than 12 years of age, participated in the 200 meter surf dash event. It was a beautiful day and a beautiful ocean with a light current and 75-degree ocean water temperature. As the swimmers and spectators gathered for refreshments and the awards presentation, the Longport Lifeguard Association and the men's lifeguard chorus sang a sentimental version of an Irish favorite, *Home from the Sea*. Major benefactors of the Captain Turner Swim received commemorative hand-crafted pottery plates depicting a swimmer in the ocean. The event raised \$25,150 for the Leukemia Lymphoma Foundation and the International Myeloma Foundation. The organizers strongly emphasized that this was a community event and not just a swim race. Equally important to their fundraising efforts was the awareness that such an event brings to the local community. Almost everyone knows someone with cancer and people want to help and the Captain Turner Swim is now an event allowing others to support a worthy cause to research and cure blood cancers.

August 24th 2014 and the 5K Cedar Island Swim in Avalon, New Jersey, treated 133 swimmers to an enjoyable swim around Cedar Island in 74 to 76 degree water. Along the course, there is a boat docked that offers champagne to the swimmers if you see it and stop long enough for a toast, and continue swimming onto the finish back at the Avalon Yacht Club. This year, the after swim refreshments were much less elegant than previous years that included sandwiches, hot dogs and burgers, deserts, sodas and even beer – were now limited to bananas, cookies and water back at the dock. Results are not posted and this fundraising swim for Wounded Warriors (special cause selected by Tim and Midge Kerr) is more like an informal training event with prizes awarded to just the top five male and female swimmers.

August 24th 2014 and the annual 9 a.m. Brigantine Elks Club One Mile Swim in the back bay only attracted 46 swimmers – and most of the participants were kids.

August 30th 2014 and the 85th Annual Atlantic city Pageant Swim was more than just a dip in the ocean for us. It was the toughest swim of the season, and almost as tough as last year's nightmare swim into the current and against the wind. The 2013 Pageant Swim was probably one of the toughest swims ever in the 85 years the Atlantic City Beach Patrol hosted this swim. The 2014 Pageant Swim was slightly less bad with winds coming from the northeast that served to push us towards shore. The course took most of us almost twice as long as usual to swim to the finish. If the course had been reversed, then we would have set record times for this swim but the ACBP never alters the direction of the swim course. This year, 160 swimmers finally finished with the last swimmer arriving in 1 hour & 38:30 minutes as compared to the 2013 last swimmer who finally finished in 1 hour & 40 minutes. Race director, Norm Draper, dedicated the 2014 commemorative long-sleeve tee shirt to Jane Hoopes (AKSTS timing services) and Assistant Chief Teroy Collins – dark gray shirt with lavender print and sporting a dolphin wearing goggles inviting swimmers to "Join the Pod at the 2014 Pageant

Ocean Swim.” Results will no longer be found at www.acbp.org due to the lack of a webmaster for the Atlantic City Beach Patrol website.

September 20th 2014 marks the final local swim for our 2014 Open Water Season with the September Splash (1 and 2 mile swims) held in Wildwood Crest, New Jersey. It was an overcast morning with 71 degree water and the water was warmer than the air. The box-course in Sunset Lake was slightly choppy on the first leg, into the current on the second leg, back to a little chop on the third leg, and swim with the current on the fourth leg of the course. The 2-mile swim consists of two-times around the course. With its 9 a.m. start, the two-mile swim had the benefit of a higher tide that helped to limit having to walk over the rock and debris cutting swimmers feet for the entry and exit from the water. At 11 a.m., the 1-Mile Swim participants had to manage safely entering and exiting the water with lower tide conditions. Many swimmers slipped on the rocks after finishing the swim and hurt themselves. This is a serious safety problem that has yet to be corrected! Even with a concrete entrance stairway into the water, the base of the stairway and area that swimmers need to walk over on their way out to the race start in the bay water is not free of debris and swimmers continue to cut their feet. There were 69 swimmers who finished the 2-Mile Swim as compared with 59 swimmers participating in the 2013 2-Mile Swim, and swim times were slower this year – the top three young (19 and younger) male swimmers finishing in less than 32 minutes (31:27 to 31:55 minutes). In the 2013 2-Mile Swim, the first place winner finished in 25:51 minutes, and the 2014 2-Mile Swim first place winner was almost 6 minutes slower. Overall, there were 182 swimmers who finished the 1-Mile Swim as compared with 173 swimmers participating in the 2013 1-Mile Swim. And swim times were also slower for the 1-Mile Swim with the top three young (16 and younger) male swimmers finishing in 16 minutes (16:00 – 16:02 – 16:04 minutes). In the 2013 1-Mile Swim, the first place winner finished in 14:47 minutes, and the 2014 first place winner was 1:13 minutes slower this year due to the ever changing open water conditions.

The 2014 Open Water Season gave us gave us comfortable ocean temperatures and fairly calm seas, and a variety of swimming venues. Traditionally popular swims, such as the Brigantine Bayfest, Ocean City, Yates, and the Captain Turner swims were all evening swims. Within the last few years, these swims were rescheduled to the morning and attract far fewer swimmers than in previous years. Perhaps this is the direct result of the increasing number of new swimming venues available within our local area that is luring swimmers from the historically long-standing swims at the South Jersey shore. And as a testament to these traditions, the ACBP Pageant Swim celebrated its 85th anniversary as the oldest open water swim in the country – well worth the experience of swimming in this 1 ½ mile ocean swim.

Delia G. Perez
Delaware Valley United States Masters Swimming
Open Water Representative

30th September 2014