

## **2015 Open Water Swim Season Summary**

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The 2015 open water season offered more than 70 open water swims at the shore and nearby states. A new swim option for this season featured the 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Pier-To-Pier Challenge held in Wildwood, New Jersey, on August 1<sup>st</sup> 2015.

May 24<sup>th</sup> 2015 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.



### **Start of the Great Chesapeake Bay Swim**

June 14<sup>th</sup> 2015 resulted in a very hot and humid day with temperatures in the mid-90s and water temperatures between 78 degrees in the mid-channel and 86 degrees in the shallow areas near the start and finish. Overall, the swimming conditions were good 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 hovered between 80 and 86 degrees, and wetsuit swimmers were overheating by the time they turned into the final leg of the course.

Throughout the 4.4 Mile Swim, Ben Lawless stroked through the waters beneath the Chesapeake Bay Bridge chasing the race's leader and two-time winner, Andrew Gyenis. He felt good, or at least as good as anyone can feel after swimming a near-marathon distance in 80 to 86 degree water while breathing air 10 degrees hotter. He had swum Gyenis's feet for most of the race, drafting off the champion of 2010 and 2012. When it was time to make his move, Lawless surged into the lead with about 500 yards to go. Breathing every stroke into the sandy beach, Lawless finished in a time of 1 hour 26 minutes 41 seconds, edging Gyenis, a rising Stanford senior, in the 4.4-mile open water race by 11 second Sunday afternoon. It was the fastest time in the last five years and just a few minutes off the course record.

"I was behind him (Gyenis) for the whole race," Lawless said. "I didn't know what he had left, but I held my stroke the whole way, and I knew I was in good shape, so I went for it." Lawless, a rising sophomore at Florida who stunningly qualified for the NCAA men's championships after having been left off the conference team this past season, improved his time from last year by more than five and a half minutes to claim top honors, leaving most of the estimated 645-person field behind in the race from Sandy Point State Park, Annapolis, to Stevensville, Maryland. "It was very hot. I feel bad for everyone who had to stand and watch me," Lawless joked. The water conditions were "a little rough, but about 2.5 miles in, it was close to glass."

Ben Lawless had another goal in mind – winning without a wetsuit. He estimated that nearly three-fourths of the field wore one. The Northern High All-Met wore a worn practice speedo, which garnered him a pair of glass plaques: one for winning, and a second for winning without a wetsuit. This was Lawless's second major open water race of the year — he placed 19th overall in the men's 10-kilometer event at USA Swimming's open water nationals — but the Maryland high school state 200- and 500-yard freestyle record holder is still focused on the pool.

Gyenis, who became the youngest champion in Bay Swim history when he won in 2010 at age 15, returned to the Bay Swim after a three-year layoff with the hopes of setting a course record. The former age group swimmer turned junior national team triathlete turned collegiate rower turned professional swimmer has had a circuitous path back to the water. After giving up triathlon to pursuit rowing upon his arrival at Stanford, Gyenis put down his varsity oar and hopped back in the pool this spring to pursue swimming full-time. The 20-year-old holds professional status with a few entry-level sponsorships. While an experienced open water swimmer, he hopes to add an Olympic trials cut in the 1,500-meter freestyle and compete at U.S. nationals as well.

Patrick Donahue, 41, of Bethesda placed third in 1:28.45, finishing ahead of 2013 winner Andrew McKissick, 19, of Elliott City by a second.

Katie Fallon, 19, of Warren, New Jersey, won the women's overall in 1:42:18; she is a rising sophomore at Providence College. Gyenis's younger brother, Daniel, age 14, of Machine Aquatics finished second in the 14&under category with a 1:46:19, trailing York's Nick Highman, also 14, who placed 14th overall in 1:42:14.

Doug Bergen (Ocean City, New Jersey) reported that he usually doesn't think twice about wearing the wetsuit, and absolutely loves swimming in it. But the unbroken sun, 90-degree air and hot water on the beach at Sandy Point State Park posed a quandary: Endure the heat and take the float of the wetsuit ... or beat the heat and take the sink of not wearing the suit. Doug opted for the suit. There were some good stretches of not horribly hot water (I guess the buoys read 78 to 80 degrees?), but there also were some awfully hot stretches at the beginning and end. He tried to swim in the shade of the south span, and that worked pretty well in keeping the sun off the back of the suit. And Doug was actually able to sight without looking up too much by looking at the edge of the shadow in the water below.

Bergen thinks that a high-tide swim has been more common over the years he's done the 4.4 Mile Swim, so it was a bit different getting pushed right and south at the beginning (actually

for about three-quarters of the swim), then getting pushed left and north at the end. But neither tide was too strong. Doug didn't feel as if I had the strongest swim, but placed in Top 50 for only the second time of his 13 swims across the bay. He wonders if the field is getting generally weaker over time, though his finishing time this year was comparable to some years with worse conditions and the "hot water" was probably a big factor this year.

A total of 353 swimmers (as compared to 440 swimmers in 2014) completed the 2015 One Mile Bay Challenge Swim. The 4.4 Mile Swim offered a consistently warm (80 to 86 degree) water temperatures throughout most of the course. A total of 635 swimmers checked in (16 did not finish) and 619 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](http://www.linmark.com)



**Dinner at Cantlers the evening before the Great Chesapeake Bay Swim** – (left to right around the table) Kuni Mihara, Doug Frohock, Dave Hirsch, Kathleen Dwyer, Dave English, Mike Keating, and Delia Perez (Doug Bergen took the photo).

June 14<sup>th</sup> 2015 and the Escape the Cape Triathlon includes a swim from the Cape May Ferry. The race director, Steve DelMonte, DelmoSports, Inc., permits participants to either swim & bike or swim & run, in lieu of completing the full triathlon. Unfortunately, this is the third year that Steve has scheduled the event for the same day as the annual Great Chesapeake Bay Swim. This year, Steve organized a new event in Lewes, Delaware, on Sunday, September 27<sup>th</sup> 2015, allowing swimmers to participate in either the 5K (overpriced at \$179) or one mile (overpriced at \$119) swims that begin by jumping off a Cape May-Lewes ferry boat in Lewes Harbor. Unfortunately, Steve decided to schedule his swim the day after the 21<sup>st</sup> Annual September Splash Swim in Wildwood Crest, New Jersey, and such scheduling will most likely affect participation at these swims. The 2014 September Splash had more than 250 swimmers participating in either the one or two mile swim races.

June 21<sup>st</sup> 2015 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 26<sup>h</sup> 2015 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. Race director, Liz Casey, directs swimmers to a box course 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 either strong incoming and outgoing tides, the race organizers selected a "box course" in an attempt to minimize swimming against the tides. That evening, 47 swimmers finished the half mile swim and 132 swimmers completed the one mile swim. Results found at [www.lmsports.com](http://www.lmsports.com)

June 27<sup>th</sup> and the 2015 Bridge-to-Bridge Swims in the back bay of Atlantic City were held in warm water (mid-70s) on a stormy afternoon with threatening thunder storms and an air temperature hovering around 70 degrees. There was a little bit of a tidal pull on an outgoing tide for the 2K Swim. The 5K swim started after the 2K Swim and followed the traditional out and back course just shy of the Dorset Avenue Bridge and back to the Atlantic City Crew Boathouse. USA swimming rules dictate that swimmers cannot wear jewelry (except a wedding ring) or watches – and finger nails must be trimmed near the fingertip – otherwise, nails were cut on the spot by race officials. The 2K race follows an out-and-back course toward Fenton Island and the Atlantic City Expressway and back (even though one never really sees Fenton Island).

Because of the threatening skies, the 5K Swim was started about 20 minutes earlier than scheduled. The first leg of the swim towards the Dorset Street Bridge seemed to be with a slack tide and somewhat choppy water with the wind at our backs. After the turn just before the Dorset Street Bridge, we realized that we were swimming into an increasingly stronger incoming tide. The weather worsened and not only did we swim into the tide but also into a strong wind that churned up the water as it began to rain sideways. The faster swimmers had less of a problem with the worsening weather and less tidal effects but the slower swimmers were greatly challenged as swim conditions worsened throughout the course to the finish by the boathouse. Sighting the Albany Street Bridge through the rain and choppy

water was a relief knowing that there really was an end to the swim. Jack Etter (age 18) was the top finisher (59:31 minutes) for the 5K Swim finisher and the last swimmers (52 year-old Arthur Bugay and 47 year-old John Mateer) finished in 2 hours and 18:87 minutes – a huge difference of almost an hour and twenty minutes behind the young first place finisher. The 5K Swim was truly a “mountain top experience” for the slower swimmers competing in worsening tidal and weather conditions to the finish!!! After all the swimmers had safely returned to the boathouse, we waited more than 3 hours for the awards to be tallied and presented to the top swimmers. Due to the worsening weather conditions, some of the race volunteers left their post at the finish line and there were discrepancies between the “official” times and times assigned to the slower swimmers. Since we could not wear our watches, we will never have a good approximate time for the actual duration of our individual swims.

Seasoned swimmers and young swimmers alike were frustrated with such a disorganized and inefficient swim award process. It seems there was an argument between the timing service and the race director a few days prior to the swim and all results were manually tallied. The race officials blamed the delay in results on the rain that soaked the timekeeper papers that were not kept dry throughout the day. 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 72 finishers and of these, only 8 were masters level swimmers. In the 5K Swim, there were 52 finishers and in this event, there were only 14 masters level swimmers. Results are available at ([www.swimpva.org](http://www.swimpva.org)).

Race Director, Dimitar Petrov, has sanctioned the Bridge-to-Bridge Swims with USA Swimming 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 are now usually scheduled the morning after the evening Independence Day Bay Swim because this is 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.

July 11<sup>th</sup> 2015 – 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Brigantine Beach Annual Ocean Swims and these swims have limited swimmer participation. Robin Taylor serves as the race director and also runs the Green Heads swim program in Brigantine, New Jersey. The three ocean swim venues – 800 meter, 2K Swim, and 10K Swim – were advertised as “with the current” courses in the ocean but instead, the swim course directed swimmers into the oncoming current. There were only 3 swimmers in the 10K Swim and only two finished: Dylan Leer (male aged 17) in 2:24:42.1 and Kelly Pontecorvo (female aged 23) in 2:49:45.8, and the DNF swimmer was too seasick! The 2K Swim had 43 swimmers and only 16 masters swimmers. And the 800 meter swim had 13 young swimmers. These swims are USA swimming events and governed by USA swimming rules. Feedback from those who entered the 2K Swim focused on the race director and officials who should have changed the course of the swims with the direction of the current but instead, swimmers were tortured by an unresponsive race director who seemed very unconcerned for the safety and comfort of the participating swimmers.

July 12<sup>th</sup> 2015 – Steelman Open Water 1.5 & 3 Mile Swims ([www.steelmantriathlon.com](http://www.steelmantriathlon.com))



### **Start of the Ocean City Masters Swim: First Wave of Male Swimmers**

July 18<sup>th</sup> 2015 and the 36<sup>th</sup> Annual Ocean City Masters Swim remains as another morning swim after changing from its original evening venue four years ago – annoying those of us who don't like morning swims! The warm 10 a.m. swim gave swimmers a strong south bound current that morning for 200 swimmers. Results can be found at [www.lmsports.com](http://www.lmsports.com)



Hayley Edwards



Quinn Cassidy

Hayley Edwards with the Stone Harbor Beach Patrol had a title to defend — actually six titles, in fact. Edwards of Pilesgrove, NJ, has been the first woman to finish the grueling mile-long swim at Ocean City's 34th Street beach ever since she first entered the contest in 2009, when she was 17. She has registered for the race every year since, and the results have not changed. Hayley was a woman on a mission and nothing would slow her down — well, except the seaweed. "The seaweed's not really a problem unless you're grossed out by it, which I am," she said with a smile.

Despite the abundant presence of the green, leafy nuisance, the former Villanova University standout rode a strong current to defend her title on Saturday. Edwards had a race for the Stone Harbor Beach Patrol on Friday night, so she was feeling tired in the hours leading up to Saturday morning's race. The fatigue did not show, however; Edwards's time of 18:16 was fourth fastest overall, and the best time by a woman by 24 seconds. Edwards, 25, held off

Ocean City's Lexi Santer, 19, (18:40) for her seventh consecutive Master's Swim victory. Katherine Schaefer, 16, (20:02) of Jamison, PA., was the third female to finish.

The overall winner of the race was Quinn Cassidy, 19, of Ocean City. Cassidy is a collegiate swimmer at the University of Florida, and he finished the mile-long ocean swim with a time of 17:15, a full 14 seconds faster than the second place finisher. Making his first appearance in the Master's Swim, Cassidy, a member of the Ocean City Beach Patrol, knew that the crashing waves of the ocean would make for starkly different swimming conditions than a cozy, heated Olympic-style swimming pool. "Ocean racing is always a different animal," Cassidy said, "but I just wanted to have a good, fun race out there."

John Gregory, 17, of Claremont, was next to cross the finish line with a time of 17:29. He was followed by Douglas Grisbaum, 15, of Ocean City. The youngest member of the top 10, Grisbaum finished at 18:07. Each of the top three male and female finishers were awarded plaques for their efforts.

In 2014, the elder statesmen in the race had their way in the Master's Swim, as the top two finishers were both above 40 years old. In total, three of the top 10 finishers in 2014 were above 40. This year's race apparently signaled a changing of the guard among the Jersey Shore's elite swimmers, as each of the top 12 entrants was under the age of 24. Last year's champion Bob Pugh, 52, of Wyndmoor, Pa., was the first over-30 entrant to finish the race with a time of 18:56 minutes and the 13<sup>th</sup> overall finisher.



**Rainbow at the 2015 Pier-To-Pier Challenge** – Bill Auty (center) – Barbara Cresse (right)

August 1<sup>st</sup> 2015 and the 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Wildwood Pier-To-Pier Ocean Swim sponsored by the Wildwood Beach Patrol and the South Jersey Triathlon Club was held at 6 p.m. Race directors, Bill Auty (WBP) and Barbara Cresse (SJTC), are working on getting "sea legs" for this evening event and hoping to increase turnout for this new swim in Wildwood. 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. 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 finisher was Tom Swift (age 42) in 18:27 minutes and the top female finisher was Lexi Sauter (age 19) in 19:42 minutes in this one mile ocean swim. The evening Pier-To-Pier Challenge had 85 swimmers who finished the swim with 3 to 5 foot waves and a rough and tumble swim to the finish!



**"Golden Arch" Finish Line – the 2015 Pier-To-Pier Challenge**



August 15<sup>th</sup> 2015 and the rescheduled 31<sup>st</sup> Annual Mid Summer Lavallette Ocean Swim was held at 8 a.m. that morning. The swim was postponed from the morning of August 8<sup>th</sup> 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 – 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. And at 8:20 a.m., the One Mile Open Championship started and there is also a wetsuit division. At the finish, it is usually 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 fall without getting a solid footing to climb onto the beach. Due to rescheduling this year's swim, there were only 85 swimmers participating this year. Swimmers can enjoy muffins and crumb cake and other goodies while waiting for the results of the swim. Results for the Mid Summer Lavallette Ocean Swim are available at ([www.j-chipusa.com/results](http://www.j-chipusa.com/results)).



**Doug Grisbaum and Alexis Shollenberger – first male (17:21 minutes) and female (20:43 minutes) finishers at the 2015 Yates Swim**

August 8<sup>th</sup> 2015 and the 44<sup>th</sup> Annual Yates Swim remains as a morning swim with a 10 a.m. start but this year, the one-mile swim was relocated to States Avenue in Atlantic City. This site serves as the traditional start for the Pageant Swim and the change in location resulted in reduced swimmer participation. Last year, there were 68 swimmers as compared to 42 swimmers in this year's swim. The sky was overcast and the ocean was a chilly 69 degrees with 4 to 6 foot waves, winds gusting from the northeast between 10 and 20 mph, choppy swimming conditions and rip currents running south along the beach. The traditional "lifeguard style" course started north of the now closed Showboat casino and directed swimmers straight out to sea towards the red flag and then south toward the pink flag and then back to the beach finishing almost in front of the Taj Mahal casino. Swimming conditions were tough and finding the two flags in such bouncy water made it difficult to site the course. It was a navigational swim requiring swimmers to be aware of where they were on the course to avoid the rip currents that swept a few swimmers south near the shore and under the Steel Pier. Surprisingly, some experienced swimmers did not navigate well enough to avoid being swept south while 11-year-old, Dolan Grisbaum (Doug's brother) finished his swim in 19:33 minutes. Given the new location for the swim, the Atlantic City Beach Patrol did not grill hot dogs for the swimmers this year but informed us that there would be fruit and water instead. But at the end of the swim, there were no refreshments for the swimmers! Historically, the Yates Swim was always held on a Friday evening and began at 6:30 p.m. and our preferred swim course is in the inlet swimming with a fast incoming tide towards the back bay and Gardners Basin. Previously, this evening swim and inlet course attracted as many as 200 to 250 swimmers. 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. Back in March 2015, the Atlantic City Council instituted a restricting plan for the Atlantic City Beach Patrol eliminating the position of chief and one assistant chief and three members of the boathouse staff. These cutbacks probably caused the relocation of the Yates Swim to States Avenue while the swim is held in the morning without having to incur any overtime pay for the ACBP if the swim was held in the evening. But given the current dire economic situation in Atlantic City, the city council could care less about open water swimming and probably prefers to see an end to the ACBP hosting of such events. We'll have to wait and see what happens to the future of open water swimming in Atlantic City. Results are currently not available at [www.acbp.org](http://www.acbp.org) nor at [www.atlanticcitybeachpatrol.org](http://www.atlanticcitybeachpatrol.org) because it is "under construction" due to the lack of a webmaster for the Atlantic City Beach Patrol website.



## **Doug Farrell – Honorary Chief in the Longport Beach Patrol**

August 16<sup>th</sup> 2015 and the Captain Turner Ocean Swim was held at 9 a.m. in Longport, New Jersey. Doug Farrell is a long time Longport resident and an avid ocean swimmer. In 2006 he was diagnosed with Multiple Myeloma. In 2014 he approached the Longport Beach Patrol about the possibility of using the annual Captain Turner Ocean Swim to raise funds and awareness of blood cancers. The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society (LLS) is the world's largest voluntary health organization dedicated to funding bloodcancer research, education and patient services. LLS's mission is to cure leukemia, lymphoma, Hodgkin's disease and myeloma, and to improve the quality of life of patients and their families.

More than 100 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 morning and a beautiful ocean with a light current, calm seas, 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 over \$25,000 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. And as a special token of recognition, the Longport Beach Patrol made race director, Doug Farrell, an honorary chief in the Longport Beach Patrol. They also presented Doug with a robe to keep him warm after a chilly morning swim. Doug has been swimming at the Longport beach for over 30 years and expressed his gratitude to the LBP for their support of the foundation's mission. He said the LBP "is like my family and I'm just so proud to be a friend of theirs."

"To me the sea is like a person – like a child I've know a long time. It sounds crazy, I know, but when I swim in the sea I talk to it. I never feel alone when I'm out there." ~~ Gertrude Ederle ~~

August 23<sup>rd</sup> 2015 and the 6<sup>th</sup> Annual 5K Cedar Island Swim in Avalon, New Jersey, treated 150 swimmers to an enjoyable swim around Cedar Island in 77 degree water. Actually, Cedar Island has become my personal favorite these days especially since the Yates Swim is no longer an inlet swim with the incoming tide where the race finished in Gardner's Basin in Atlantic City. Today's conditions were almost perfect and there wasn't too much choppy water on the first leg of the course south along the marsh before turning left into the residential area for the rest of the "box" course. And of course, the swimmers wearing a wetsuit had faster times. I stopped at the champagne boat and enjoyed two big sips from a

fluted "glass" before heading down the last leg of the course. Along the course, there is a boat along a dock that offers champagne to the swimmers. If you see the boat, then stop long enough for a toast and continue swimming to the finish back at the Avalon Yacht Club. Since its inception in 2009, race director, Midge Kerr, began this "champagne toast" as a very inventive way to celebrate the swim while refreshing the palate from all the salty water. It was very pleasant swimming with 150 swimmers strung out along the course and on such a beautiful day, we were all just living the dream!! This year, the after swim refreshments included pizza from Tonios and cream donuts from Kohler's Bakery. 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 overall male and female swimmers, grand masters, and top three (first to sip) champagne winners.



**Retired Delaware State Trooper, Ray Peden, is "living the dream" as a life guard for the Rehoboth Beach Patrol at the Lake George USMS Championship 2.5K Swim**

August 29<sup>th</sup> 2015 and the USMS National Championship 2.5K Swim was held in Lake George, New York. Swim conditions were perfect and according to Ray Peden, it's one of the most beautiful places to swim. Ray Peden of New Castle, Delaware took first place (60-64 age group) at the 2015 Open Water Masters National Championships. Peden completed the 2.5K swim in 37:33.0 minutes. Second place went to Jack Tuholske of Missoula, Montana (41:22.7) and third place went to Mike Delaney of North Ferrisburgh, Vermont (41:58.8).

August 30<sup>th</sup> 2015 and the annual 9 a.m. Brigantine Elks Club One Mile Swim in the back bay only attracted 41 swimmers – and most of the participants are young swimmers.



**John Malecki (race director with loudspeaker) and top 3 male (Doug Boehme 1<sup>st</sup> place without sunglasses) and top 3 female (Laurie Hug 1<sup>st</sup> place wearing a sun visor) swimmers in the 2015 Pageant Swim**

September 5<sup>th</sup> 2015 and the 86<sup>th</sup> Annual Atlantic City Pageant Swim was another rough and tumble distance ocean swim this year! It was the toughest swim of the season but not as torturous as the 2013 Pageant Swim. The 2013 Pageant Swim was probably one of the toughest swims ever in the history of the 86 years the Atlantic City Beach Patrol hosted this event with a nightmare swim into the current and against the wind. The 2015 Pageant Swim had strong rip currents along the shore heading south and gusting northeast winds driving the 5 to 7 foot (and higher) waves diagonally towards shore along the swim course. Before beginning the race, the ACBP held a "powwow" about the swim conditions but decided to continue with the swim. The ACBP wished the Pageant Swim had been scheduled for the day before because ocean conditions were perfect that day! The start of the swim was very difficult negotiating the rip currents and waves pounding on swimmers attempting to swim over and under the waves out into the ocean. It was work to get out through the rough surf but after reaching the first turn flag near the Steel Pier, swimmers then benefited from the southbound current but had to manage the large waves and unpredictable choppiness that made it difficult for most swimmers to keep a consistent swim stroke. We all have exciting stories from the swim to tell ... and one of mine was being "lifted" up so high by a wave that I thought I was at Sea World with a trained young whale lifting me straight up into the air! Of course, I couldn't help but scream and that was a first for me!!! After that, I headed out to sea for France and kept away from the colliding waves breaking on our right side. Even with the southbound current, it was a lot of work swimming up and over and down the waves. Those swimmers who live at the shore and regularly swim in the ocean are regularly train in such ocean conditions vs. swimmers whose training is limited to pool swimming. Prior to the start of the Swim, the new race director, John Malecki (ACBP), announced to the swimmers that if they felt they didn't have the skills to safely navigate today's challenging ocean conditions, then they should not participate. This year, 7

swimmers opted out of the event and 133 swimmers finished. Today's swim produced fast finishing times, and Doug Boehme (age 17) was the first male finisher in 21:56 minutes and Laurie Hug (age 50) was the first female and third overall finisher in 22:26 minutes – and the final swimmer finished in 51:39 as compared with the last swimmer in the 2014 Pageant Swim who finished in 1 hour & 38:30 minutes. Results are currently not available at [www.acbp.org](http://www.acbp.org) because it is "under construction" due to the lack of a webmaster for the Atlantic City Beach Patrol website.

September 26<sup>th</sup> 2015 marked the final local swim for the 2015 Open Water Season with the September Splash (1 and 2 mile swims) held in Wildwood Crest, New Jersey. It was an overcast morning with 68 degree water, extremely blustery winds from the northeast and choppy water conditions. The box-course in Sunset Lake was choppy on the first leg as the wind pushed swimmers to the left as they tried to swim to the first turn. The second leg of the course had the worst conditions because we had to swim directly into the wind, constant choppy water and current – and the unrelenting wind and chop created a sensation of swimming with a constant "Neti Pot" irrigating our sinuses throughout this portion of the course. Turning right again on the third leg of the course resulted in slightly less choppy water as the wind pushed swimmers to the right. And finally, we were able to swim with the current and the wind on the fourth leg of the course. I decided to wear my full wetsuit for the swim to keep warm but ultimately, it was a huge disadvantage because of the buoyancy, the high winds tossed me around on top of the choppy waves and pushed me off course throughout the swim. So, even though I remained comfortably warm for the 2-Mile Swim, I also swam a much longer 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 allowed swimmers to float over the rock and debris that have historically cut swimmers feet during the entry and exit from the water. At 11 a.m., the 1-Mile Swim participants had the challenge of to manage safely entering and exiting the water due to the lower tide conditions. Many swimmers have 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 50 swimmers who finished the 2-Mile Swim as compared with 69 swimmers participating in the 2014 2-Mile Swim, and swim times were slower this year due to the swim conditions – the top three young (16 and 15 years of age) male swimmers finishing in less than 32 minutes (31:30 to 34:25 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 finished in 31:27 minutes – almost 6 minutes slower. Overall, there were 131 swimmers who finished the 1-Mile Swim as compared with 173 swimmers participating in the 2014 1-Mile Swim. And swim times were also slower for the 1-Mile Swim with the top three young (16 and 15 years of age) male swimmers finishing in (17:35 – 17:52 – 18:18 minutes) as compared to the top 2014 finishing times (16:00 – 16:02 – 16:04 minutes). In the 2013 1-Mile Swim, the first place male swimmer finished in 14:47 minutes, the 2014 first place male swimmer finished in 16 minutes, and the 2015 first place male swimmer finished in 17:35 due to the ever changing open water conditions.

September 27<sup>th</sup> 2015 and the Escape the Cape Open Water Swims were cancelled due to the windy and choppy conditions hindering the event being held in Lewes, Delaware.

The 2015 Open Water Season gave us comfortable ocean temperatures and both calm and very rough seas, along with 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 diminishing sponsorships for the swims as well as 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 86<sup>th</sup> anniversary as the oldest open water swim in the country – well worth the experience of swimming in this 1 ½ mile ocean swim.

And finally, here's a teachable moment for us all to consider. According to Kelly Annie, jewelry designer with her own "perfectly imperfect collection" of handcrafted jewelry with soul, her "keep on swimming" bracelet inspires us – "Life can be as hard to live as swimming against the tide. But at the worst of times, if you will just remember to keep swimming, sooner or later you will develop the ability to swim through life like a fish through the ocean."

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