

2020 Open Water Swim Season Summary

Delia G. Perez – Open Water Representative
Delaware Valley Local Masters Swim Committee

The 2020 open water season was significantly impacted by the Corona Virus Pandemic and most open water swims were **cancelled** due to safety precautions

May 24th 2020 and the 33rd Annual Jim McDonnell Lake Swims that normally offers a 2-day event in Lake Audubon, Reston, Virginia during the May 23rd and 24th weekend was *cancelled*.

May 24th 2020 and these season-opener swims with this year's very competitive 64th Annual Navesink Swims (1.2 or 2.4 miles) in the Navesink River was *cancelled*.

June 14th 2020 and the annual Great Chesapeake Bay Swim held nearby Annapolis, Maryland, was *cancelled*.

June 14th 2020 and the 8th Annual Escape the Cape Triathlon includes a 3-Mile Swim from the Cape May Ferry was *cancelled*. Unfortunately, this is the eighth year that race director, Steve Delmonte, has scheduled his event either during the same weekend or just before or after the annual Great Chesapeake Bay Swim. Hosted by: www.DelMoSports.com

June 27th 2020 and the informal 26th Annual Donny Fund Day (2½ Mile Swim, Kayak, or Paddle Surf across Lakes Bay or 5K Run or Walk along the shore of Lakes Bay) was *cancelled*.

July 11th 2020 and the 41st Annual Ocean City Beach Patrol's T. John Carey Masters Swim was *cancelled*.

July 18th 2020 and the 19th Annual Iron Soldiers Swim & Biathlon in Ocean City, NJ, starting at 7 pm at 28th Street and the Beach for a ¾ Mile Ocean Swim was *cancelled*.

August 9th 2020 and the reconstituted version now known as the Jim Whelan Around the Island Marathon Swim in Atlantic City, New Jersey, was *cancelled*.



Jim Whelan – high school teacher, Atlantic City Life Guard, Mayor of Atlantic City, NJ Assemblyman, NJ State Senator, and Open Water Swimmer

August 9th 2020 – The 12th Annual Steelman Open Water 1.5 & 3 Mile Swims held at Nockamixon State Park in Quakertown, PA., were not cancelled.

July 25th 2020 and the 7th Annual Sea Isle City Beach Patrol One Mile Ocean Swim held in Sea Isle City, New Jersey, was *cancelled*.

July 26th 2020 and the Captain Turner Ocean Swim held at 6:30 p.m. in Longport, NJ, was *cancelled*.

August 1st 2020 and the 6th Annual Pier to Pier Challenge held in Wildwood, New Jersey, was *cancelled*.

August 8th 2020 and the 91st Annual Pageant Swim was held in Atlantic City. Seahawks Swimming hosted the 91st Pageant Swim in conjunction with USA Swimming to ensure the continuance of this historic swim. This year the 1.2 Mile Pageant Swim was limited to 90 swimmers to ensure the safety and health of all participants.

The 91st Pageant Swim finally started after 10 a.m. and swimmers were assigned to their group of 9 swimmers with about 1 minute between each group entering the water. Ocean conditions were fairly calm as we swam out to sea and then swam south to turn a buoy and then swam back to the first turn buoy for our final turn and swim back to the start area on shore. The water temperature was 73 degrees allowing swimmers to remain comfortable while some swimmers also wore wetsuits today.

In 2017, when the Pageant Swim was reactivated, there were a total of 57 swimmers. There were 80 swimmers who participated in the 2018 Pageant Swim and 95 swimmers participated in the 2019 Pageant Swim. And this year, a total of 85 swimmers completed the Pageant Swim course. No awards were given this year, and instead, race organizers encouraged social distancing and mask-wearing for everyone on the beach.



After the 91st Pageant Swim (left to right): Gil Cardillo, Ray McKendall, Doug Frohock, Delia Perez, Molly Williamson, and Jennifer Muller on the beach after the swim in Atlantic City, New Jersey – all masked up and nowhere to go!

August 15th 2020 and the 36th Annual Mid-Summer Lavallette Ocean Swim was cancelled.

August 23rd 2020 and the Elks Club in Brigantine, NJ, that normally hosts the Bayfest Swim, *cancelled* the swim.



Race Director, Midge Kerr (right) with Delaware Valley USMS Open Water Rep, Delia Perez



Midge is all set for our corona-ready swim!



Finish area for the Cedar Island Swim



August 23rd 2020 and the 10th Annual 5K Cedar Island Swim in Avalon, New Jersey, treated 213 swimmers to another interesting adventure swim around Cedar Island in 74-degree water. The Cedar Island 5K Swim remains my personal favorite these days especially with the loss of the Yates Swim – a wonderful navigational swim in the inlet between Atlantic City and Gardner's Basin with an incoming tide to finish the race in Atlantic City's Gardner's Basin.

Given the required safety precautions for the swim, swimmers were assigned to one of ten swim waves, entering the back-bay water every two minutes – beginning at 11:30 a.m. with the final wave starting at 11:48 a.m. Each swim wave had approximately 20 swimmers assigned based on projected finishing times for the 5K Swim. Faster swimmers started in the early waves and slower swimmers entered the water later during the almost 20-minute spread for starting each wave. Face masks were required to be worn and only discarded in a trash bin as a swimmer actually entered the water for their in-water start.

As we waiting with our individually assigned swim waves, we stood in the pouring rain and thankfully, the forecasted thunderstorms stayed north of Avalon. Fortunately, the swim was not delayed or cancelled due to potential lightening while the weather improved with clearing and sunny skies. Given the smaller swim waves of 20 swimmers, there was less “bunching” up at the beginning of the race but inexperienced tended to stop and block other swimmers trying to swim past or around them along the course. And the traditional boat located about $\frac{3}{4}$ along the swim course did not offer the traditional champagne sip this year. During the first leg of the course, we swam with a slack tide. The second leg headed us into the slightly outgoing tide and the third leg offered a little push with the slightly outgoing tide. As we turned into the final fourth leg of the course, we enjoyed the added assist with a more noticeable outgoing tide to the finish back at the Avalon Yacht Club.

Historically, the informal inception of the Cedar Island Swim was created as a challenge among friends in 2009, race director, Midge Kerr, offers a “champagne toast” as a very inventive way to celebrate the swim while refreshing the palate from all the salty water. This year, the after-swim refreshments were discontinued to because of COVID-19 safety issues ... but the amazing and locally-made cream puff pastries were available after the swim. The only difference this year was the individual bagging of each delicious cream puff as a health and safety precaution. For the fifth year in a row now, chip timing was used for the swimmers and the results were eventually posted on the Kerr Charities website at <http://www.sjtiming.com/Cedarswim16.html>.

Lucky for us, Kerr Charities hosts its fundraising swim for various charities (specially selected by Tim & Midge Kerr) and it is more like an informal training event with prizes awarded to just the top five overall male and female swimmers and grand masters. Due to health and safety precautions, awards were given to top finishers individually without the benefit of a crowd of cheering swimmers. Clayton Bernauer (age 17 – Parsippany, NJ) finished 1st overall and 1st male in 48:24 minutes. Lizzy Washburn (age 15 – Summit, NJ) finished 4th overall and 1st female in 51:48 minutes.

September 26th 2020 and the September Splash Swim was held at 9 a.m. in Sunset Lake in the back-bay waters of Wildwood Crest, New Jersey. The swim was not promoted and participation was limited to the local youth swim teams only.

The 2020 Open Water Season left enthusiasts on their own to figure out where to swim this summer. Indoor pools were closed but thankfully, the Jersey Shore provided ample access to ocean and bay swimming all summer. Hopefully, an effective vaccine for COVID-19 can be developed in time for our 2021 Open Water Season.

While we cannot change conditions or ensure the things we love will last forever, here is a teachable moment for us all to consider. Kelly Annie, a jewelry designer who created her own “perfectly imperfect collection” of handcrafted jewelry with soul and her “keep on swimming” bracelet inspires us to remember – “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.”

“To me the sea is like a person – like a child I’ve known 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 ~

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14th October 2020

“Nothing in the world is as soft and yielding as water. Yet for dissolving the hard and inflexible, nothing can surpass it. The soft overcomes the hard; the gentle overcomes the rigid.” ~ Tao Te Ching ~



Wading into the ocean, the water bears our weight as it slides through our fingers and between our toes. We become keenly aware of the abundance of life as well as every one of our fellow swimmers. We realize why we swim and why the pull is relentless. We immerse ourselves in the water and feel so relaxed and connected to the good in the world. We are rinsed of time as past and future dissolve, and there is only this moment.