

Dallas Aquatic Masters

HAWAII

Special Edition Newsletter—Maui Channel Swim-September 7, 2009

“Channeling Greatness”

My second DAM experience in the only
Inter- Island Relay Race in the World.

September 7, 2009

By Eney Jones



I licked my goggles last week and tasted the salt. It took me back—the salt—the sea—the air—the sound of the drums. Thinking of a day being drawn to a close in Maui; a warrior leaping from black rocks into the sea, the green flash appearing as the sun disappears on the horizon, a cold drink in my hand, my skin glistening after being kissed by the sun all day. All of it, just a reminder that life is good; but life in Maui is so much better.

I was going to Maui for the Channel Relay between the islands of Lanai and Maui. The inflight magazine had an article on the event. And inflight entertainment had a show-called MYTHBUSTERS. This week it featured shark myths, they were discussing: yum yum yellow, magnetic bracelets, whether to play dead or flail around.” Great,” I thought.

I opted to read about the Channel Relay; safer more inspirational. The Maui Lanai channel swim has been in existence since 1972. “Channel swimming,” the article read, “necessitates a strong kick, a good stroke- and a willingness to surrender to the abyss. A channel offers a landscape of pure water, with nothing visible below but shifting shadows and fading light, and swimming one requires not just a strong body but a strong mind as well.”

Dallas Aquatic Masters’ swimmer, Kristen Henderson put it well, when she said, “I just got into a good pace and enjoyed the experience and the beauty of the deep blue ocean. The race was longer than any of us expected. I would just breathe to the side that the boat was on, and I could see my teammates giving me the thumbs up sign. It brought out the best in all of us.”

The relay is a timed event with six swimmers. Each swimmer swims 30 minutes and then after the first rotation the swimmer swims 10 minutes with the rotation continuing until the shore is touched on Maui. The total distance is anywhere from 9 to 12 miles depending on many things, i.e., the strength of your team, the boat captain, the winds, the currents and of course your attitude (that thing we always bring with us and can’t get away from).

The article continued about Ian Emberson, the race director, a man with a calm, cool demeanor and a rich amazing past. Every year Ian not only puts on the race but participates in it. If you have ever been a race director, you know what an amazing feat this is. He was one of the “original “ Iron men finishing third in the 2.4 mile swim, 112 mile bike and 26.2 mile run. He has swum from Molokai to Oahu...35 miles. This year he was relinquishing race director duties to his wife Coco.

In Maui, two days before the race, I watched DAM coach Bobby Patten go over the paperwork with Coco. DAM had one of the biggest contingencies, 6 boats and 36 swimmers all adding to Coco’s headache.

Some DAM relays were in the “Trouble Box”. Some had not enough relay forms, not enough masters’ cards, individual information or money. Bobby explained to her that his problems were magnified because his teams are a copulation of people from everywhere that some he sees perhaps twice a year.

I stared in the “Trouble Box” and noticed that Ian’s personal team was in there as well. Immediately I felt better. Coco called the post office in Kauai and Bobby’s final check was there. All was finally complete. All systems were now go.

On the way back we ran into Bob Placek, a nice guy with a good heart but the kind of man I want to tell that fantasy football isn't real. He plays the relays as if they were "real". He recruits, he pays, he creates a dream team to best compete with the Australians for the win. And really I start to notice his creation of reality is just enhancing mine. I want to be faster, stronger and better.

Race Morning.

Something was up. It was eerily calm at 5 am except for the conversation between Patti Monzingo and her boat captain. The sea was still, the trade winds weren't awake; all the elements had hit the snooze button only to unleash their power later.

Our relay had not gone over placement yet and we started to discuss it on the way over. The relay consisted of Bobby Patten, Tim Glenn, Katie McClelland, Erin Sackash, John Becker and me. They wanted me to go first. So this year we weren't going fastest to slowest. I acquiesced but had a strong level of internal mumbling.

Each time I present at an Open Water Clinic I show a picture of Picasso's painting Guernica. I tell people that this is their worst case scenario for open water... A man screaming...a horse's head... mayhem. The only control you will have is over yourself. The swim might actually look like the Spanish Civil War just deal with it. Internal calmness, that is the key.



This being said, the trade winds picked up in opposition to the current causing 5-6 foot swells. There were 100 boats, gasoline permeated the air. It was washing machine choppy.

"Relax" I told myself, "I love air swimming," where the wave picks you up you go over the back of it and then your arms move through the air before you get slapped down into the ravine. It was so fun until one air swim I looked down not at the water but at the coral reef. I slammed down on top of it.

"Oh no," I thought, "I am top ramen for sharks...just add water" I could tell I was bleeding. "What did the myth busters show say about blood?" My attitude turned me into Chicken of the Sea. My mind, the article on the plane said, needed to be strong but now my mind was unruly and untamed.

I tried to calm myself by thinking of quotes of greatness. Let's see, Ralph Waldo Emerson said, "What lies before us and what lies behind us are small compared to what lies within us." But what did he say about what lies beneath us? Is that a shadow of substance or some dancing light? Is it moving?

The boat found me and I saw them at 25 minutes. I was so happy to get out. I said to Erin, "It was rough out there, was it rough in the boat? She replied, "It was so rough in the boat our blender fell over." I laughed so hard I nearly fell over.



Meanwhile, on another boat, The **DAM OLD DUDES**, was a ship made of legends. Onboard was Andy Ellis, Ryan Reid, Chuck Lundberg, "Dr. D." Geoff Myckleby, the creator of the amazing Maui Magic, former gold medalist Jim Montgomery "Kimo" (his Hawaiian name), and the father of the first flip turn done in competition, Graham Johnston.

Graham was turning green and puking. When it was time for his second turn Ryan asked if he were okay. He looked, puked again and replied, "I am fine, I am fine." And with that dove into the sea. Tough, dignified and classy. That pretty much sums up the whole relay. The **DAM OLD DUDES** ended

up third in the Senior Makule Division with a time of 4:35:45. Plans I hear are in the works to overtake the Olympic Club next time.

It seems that seasickness even affected the winners. The Australian Masters Tattersails won in a time of 3:08:05. Peter Theil announced at awards that their placement of swimmers was decided by swimming whoever was not puking at the time.

Dam's Finest Women, Patti Monzingo, Julia Hiatt, Meaghan Gill, Gigi McGuire, Lisa Mize and Valerie Davis finished second in a towel performance with a time of 6:25 behind Placek's Tiberon Milers who finished in 3:53.34.

Our relay won the Mixed division in a time of 4:01 with a medical miracle; Tim Glenn running up the beach weeks after having his knee scoped.

Captain B's team had a fine performance as a DAM mixed up relay with Vicki Massar, Captain B, John Crowley, Kristen Wagner Hendersen and Greg Carr.

Captain Warren Pottenger, along with trusty mates Kathy Fitchell, Bill Mahoney, Regina Moss, David Weeks, and Rick Borry, endured the washing machine much like the other DAM teams...one stroke at a time (including some air swimming I'm sure). DAM Open crushed the Australian contingency of Sociales Tattersails by over 1 minute.

As the awards wrapped up...

Some went on to Waikiki

Where Bobby P found his fitness again and his way back to the podium

Katie McClelland demolished her age group by 8 minutes

I ended up second overall female, behind a 22 year old Australian

For further results

http://www.pacificsportsevents.com/races/WRWS/2009/Divisions_09.htm

Some went to swim Aumakua

Where Kimo won the one mile SPRINT

And John Becker was fourth overall in the 2.4 Mile Swim

For further results: <http://www.aumukuaswim.org/2009%20results.htm>

Some went hiking

Some went biking

Others took the road to Hana

While some played golf

Or made friends with turtles

But we all saw the green flash which ignited our ability to channel greatness-even if it was only for 30 minutes.



To view all the Maui Channel Swim pictures—go to <http://damswim.smugmug.com> and click on HAWAII 2009. You won't believe until you see it!