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AT Special Feature:

Swimming the Golden Gate--Part 1



Swimmers brave the chilly waters in the 3rd Annual Roper Invitational Golden Gate Swim

More swimmers than expected were going to show up for the 3rd Annual Bob Roper Golden Gate Swim, so the email asked everyone to be at registration at 7:00 A.M sharp. After making a wrong turn and taking the long way to get back to the registration site, I arrived by 7:30 A.M. and still had plenty of time to register. Everyone was friendly as I registered, got my number put on my hand - DM 227- received my yellow cap, t-shirt and embroidered towel.

After getting partially into my super thin flexible "Italian" wetsuit (which I brought last year for the Tiburon Mile swim), I went over to the 8:00 AM briefing where we were told the water temperature had dropped a few degrees in the past week and was now 57. We were given the basic briefing information about current temperature and race strategy for the "fast" and the "slow" swimmers (the water current making the difference). I believe the plan was, we were going to be dropped off a little further to the west to account for the current heading into the Bay.

The 680 14 & UNDER Girls Qualify for JO's Olympic Training Camp at Stanford
 Olympic Trials Coverage by Matt Martinez
 Chelsea Chenault, 13-Year-Old Phenom
 3 Walnut Creek Aquanauts Named to 2008 U.S. Junior National Team
 Walnut Creek Aquanauts Top Junior Team and Trio in the Nation
 Crow Canyon Sharks Place Second at Far Westerns

Young Terrapins Shine at Pre-Olympic Trial Swim Meet
 Crow Canyon Sharks Shaila Yoder
 Olympic Trials, Here we Come!

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We then boarded onto two cable car buses for our trip to Pier 9. It was an incredibly jarring ride, as the streets weren't the smoothest, and I think the cable car bus needed new shocks or something, but it was a pleasant sunny morning and it was fun getting to know the swimmers next to me. As we passed the boats, I kidded the swimmer next to me that one was ours (I pointed to a beautiful large vessel). We pulled up to the pier and, unbelievably, that was our boat! It was a beautiful, large, multi-decked vessel that was spacious and luxurious and had plenty of seating for all the swimmers and spectators.

Accompanied by my wife, dad and one of my daughters for moral support, I was set for the adventure, nervous though, that I had put in enough training time for the swim. The boat left at around 9:15. Everyone seemed upbeat and friendly as we met swimmers from all around the Bay Area, California, and even as far away as England and Australia!

It was a beautiful sunny morning as we sailed out to the Golden Gate. However, looking ahead, we saw a thick fog bank covering all but the tips of the Golden Gate Bridge. As we sailed past Alcatraz Island basking in the sun and the gleaming water looking fairly calm, I couldn't help but wish we were going to swim Alcatraz instead of the fogged-in Golden Gate. However, we sailed on into the fog bank and it was thicker than I thought, as I saw a bunch of boats patiently waiting for us in the damp morning. In fact, that's about all I could see – the boats – no shore in sight.

Soon, an announcement was made over the speaker system that the fog was too thick and we would have to wait for it to lift. Swimmers were milling about the boat, some "skins" just in their suits and caps, who must have been plenty cold, as my legs were starting to get cold in my wet suit (I've never been cold in my wetsuit out of the water!). Of course, my feet were freezing (we were told to leave our bag of clothes on the cable car buses). However, with spectators with me I could have easily kept my shoes and given them to them before I left.

There was talk about cancelling the event since we could not see where we would be swimming to, but the fog lifted a little bit and, as the boat moved eastward and closer to land, we were able to see our target, "Lime Rock," through the fog! And, with that, the announcement was made that we were going ahead with the swim. The fast swimmers would be jumping from the port door, while the slower swimmers would be jumping from the starboard door (two at a time). As the groups lined up (I was in no real hurry), I headed over to the port door to line up behind the fast swimmers, then decided, realistically, I should go over to the starboard door, and watched as they made the 8-10' jump two at a time. One person actually sat down to get closer to the water when making their jump. The person in front of me jumped in and seemed under water for quite awhile before he came to the surface and started

swimming toward the Marin shoreline.

I made the jump...continued next week

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