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Ron Collins Will Attempt To Swim Catalina Channel To Join Marathon Swimming's Elite "Triple Crown Club"

CLEARWATER, FL--Ron Collins, 48, of Clearwater, FL will attempt to swim across the 20 mile channel between Catalina Island and the mainland of California on September 2nd. The Catalina Channel was first conquered by a swimmer in 1927, and is known as one of the world's greatest marathon swims, pairing up with the English Channel (22 miles) and Manhattan Island (28 miles) to be jointly known as the "Triple Crown of Marathon Swimming."



Collins is a member of St. Petersburg Masters Swim Team and has been swimming competitively for 37 years. His first marathon swim was on April 15, 1998 when he became the first to swim the 24 mile length of Tampa Bay. He organized the event as a USMS (United States Masters Swimming) sanctioned event and remains the event's Race Director.

In June of 2002, Collins competed in the Manhattan Island Marathon Swim in New York City, completing the challenge in 8 hours while finishing 2nd overall. Next was the grueling English Channel swim which he completed in September, 2004. If Collins is successful in completing the Catalina Channel swim, he will add his name to a short list of swimmers who have completed all three and have added their name to the Triple Crown Club of open water marathon swimming. As of August 20, 2010, the list includes less than 40 names, a Who's Who in marathon swimming:

1. Allison Streeter (UK)
2. Taranath Narayan Shenoy (India)
3. Rick Barthels (USA)
4. Bob West (USA)
5. Peter Urrea (USA)
6. Carol Sing (USA)
7. Antonio Argüelles (Mexico) (twice, in '99 & '09)
8. Nick Olmos-Lau (Mexico)
9. T. Scott Coleman (USA)
10. Rebecca Jackman (USA)
11. Kevin Murphy (UK)
12. Kathleen Wilson (USA)
13. Forrest Nelson (USA)
14. Andrew Hewitt (USA)
15. David Blanke (USA)
16. Elizabeth Fry (USA)
17. Marcia Cleveland (USA)
18. Bill Hoehn (USA)
19. Sally Minty-Gravett (Jersey Island, UK)
20. James Pittar (Australia)
21. Scott Richards (USA)
22. Andrew "Alan" Voisard (USA)
23. Tina Neil (USA)
24. Rendy Lynn Opdycke (USA)
25. Michelle Davidson (USA)
26. Michelle Macy (USA)
27. Tom Hecker (USA)
28. Erica Moffett (USA)
29. Nancy Steadman-Martin (USA)
30. Michael Miller (USA)
31. Nick Adams (UK)
32. Elaine Kornbau Howley (USA)
33. Stephen Autry (USA)
34. Jeffrey Cleveland (USA)
35. Sakura Hingley (UK)
36. Samantha Simon (USA)
37. Jim Barber (USA)
38. Craig Lenning (USA)
39. Mallory Mead (USA)

"I think that about a third of the swimmers on this list have come to swim the Tampa Bay Marathon Swim, and they've brought me a wealth of knowledge as I've observed them both in, and out of the water." Collins said. "I'm exciting to think that my name may be added to this list soon."

The Catalina Channel presents unique challenges and dangers that make it a daunting task. The swim starts at midnight in an effort to finish before the winds kick up the seas the following afternoon. The swimmer must swim until sunrise in pitch darkness, accompanied only by a 60 foot dive boat and thoughts of the active marine life in the surrounding water. Kelp can also be a mental challenge since, "Anything that touches you is spooky and creepy during one of these swims. And don't even talk to me about the little 'cleaning fish' that nibble on your toes as you make your way through the kelp."

The attempt should take 10 to 14 hours, depending on conditions, tides, and the attitude of the swimmer. "We're not trying to race across this Channel to set some kind of record. Like Manhattan and the English Channel, this is a once-in-a-lifetime experience. I'm excited about doing it once, but I don't want to do it again. In this type of event, the thing that matters most is just to complete the distance."

For updates, visit www.DistanceMatters.com for GPS mapping, pictures, video and real-time commentary via Twitter feed.

SOURCE: Distance Matters, Inc.

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