

## ***Clare Payne's report - a long trip to Rotto***

Well I made it. I am currently in an internet cafe, besides severe sunburn I am fine. I have a horrid goggle and cap mark across my head - not attractive..

Well I'm glad it's done, but god it was tough. The start was delayed as they contemplated whether to cancel the event. I was so nervous and I really didn't

Need to hang around any longer. Then they announced that you should get your estimated time and add 50% due to the conditions - I was thinking I would do the swim in 6.5-7hrs so that would take me to at least 10 hours.

Basically we were against the swell and hitting headwinds (15-28 knots) the whole time. It was raining and pitch black. It was so rough for the whole 20ks.

I dived in at the start just thinking I would swim as long as I could. I had no idea I would be getting out 9hrs 45 minutes later!

So some stats: 75 pulled out before the start, 215 were rescued at the 5k mark, 240 at the 10k mark (1/4 of the field). People had hypothermia, shock etc. a few were hospitalized. Some people's support boat sank, there was hammerhead sharks, support crew were ill...170 solos started and 66 finished. If someone had said that at the beginning I would not have thought I would have been one of the 66. No way. Thank god I didn't know what was going on with the rest of the field when I was in there!

My body felt fine the whole time but I had some mental high/low, but I am just so glad I kept plugging away. It can't get much harder than that (the average English Channel crossing is 10hours!).

Anyway it was great coming in at the beach, they had a race time cut off and I made it by 1 minute, I took over teams of 4 and duos on the way in (wimps!). I had to run up the beach so that my time was registered. It was such a relief but I just couldn't believe that it took so long. Less than half the field of 2000 made it to Rottneest by the 4pm cut-off. I basically swam from 6:15am to 4pm with only 4 hours of sun cream protection on (applied at 3:30am - hence why I am burnt to a sinder).

Highs:

1. The lead up with great support crew and great swimmers.
2. knowing I had an unreal support crew.
3. Dad calling me just before I headed off and saying that they were looking forward to seeing me. I needed to hear it.

4. Thinking about food - smith's chips, burgers, cheese and biscuits.
5. Getting to the point where I started to count down the km's rather than up.
6. Looking to the right (the only side I breath to) and seeing Adam or Chris and the whitfords boat in the background. I never felt alone.
7. asking Adam how far I had to go and he told me I had about another hour and a half, I told him I didn't think I had it in me. He said 'yes you do' and I started to swim again.
8. Being told by Helen that I had 1.6ks to go. This was probably the first time I truly thought I was going to make it. I felt emotional - I felt like crying. At the same time some guys went by in their boat and yelled out to me 'good on you love keep going' - never before I have I been so happy to be called love!
9. Seeing stingrays, numerous fish and the sand coming into rotto.
10. Finishing. Being at rotto. Seeing my support crew, seeing my friends and knowing it was finally done.

#### Lows:

1. I stopped after the first hour for a drink and mike yelled out that I was doing really well and that I had swum 3ks in the first hour, I was shattered, my usual pace is 4ks/hour, I knew if I was doing 3 at the beginning of the race then it wasn't going to be good later.
2. The first 2 hours.
3. Reaching the 10km mark. At a drink stop dad had said I was 1k off the 10k! Mark, I then swam for another 1/2 hour and when I asked how much further Chris said I had 800m till the 10k mark! Another 1/2 hour later I still wasn't there. It was tough for the support crew to plot exactly where we were and I understood that but gee it was tough on my mind. I realized I just had to focus on something else other than how much distance I had covered.
4. Reaching the 15k mark and thinking I had 5k to go then being told I the course was actually 22ks.
5. being cold.
6. Having no savory food.
7. Thinking it wouldn't be bad to be taken by a shark.
8. Water getting in my lollie jar (you all know how much I like my lollies...)

Pre-race lows:

Waking up and seeing the conditions. Vomiting 4 times between 1-4am the day of the race. Feeling like crying about what I was going to go through. Realizing I wouldn't be able to hold down any food before the race. Feeling! Like I had a lot of people there for me and I didn't want to let them down.

Anyway when I woke up this morning the conditions were perfectly flat (that would be right!) but really I wouldn't change a thing. Mission accomplished. The water looks perfect today and for the first time in my life I don't feel like a swim!

Support Crew Report - Chris Payne

It was pretty tough going - 15 knot plus head winds the whole way, 1-2 metre swell with the odd rain squall - but she made it to a huge reception at Rottneest.

The radio traffic on the VHF was unbelievable. People were being rescued everywhere. Numerous people had their legs cut up by props of support boats - there were 700 plus support boats for the near 2000 swimmers. These ranged in size from runabouts to a 46 foot Riviera and a couple of yachts. You can imagine the chaos when you put that many people in the water with that many boats and they are all driving around trying to find the swimmer they support. Interspersed with this are the kayakers who are also trying to find swimmers. The first 2ks was a nightmare.

We were lucky that Adam (the primary kayaker) hooked up with Clare early and then we spotted him quite quickly as well. But from the moment of spotting Adam to the time we were actually able to get the boat alongside Clare was half an hour. This was a pretty tense time as we had to ensure we didn't lose sight of Clare, not hit any other boats and more importantly not run over any swimmers in the water around us.

Clare's achievement was pretty unbelievable made even more remarkable by the conditions encountered. When you add to this the fact that the whole thing was organized from Sydney with us hiring our own support boat, driving our own support boat, hiring our own kayak, paddling our own kayak and navigating our own course all without any local assistance what so ever. When we actually mentioned this to people over there they couldn't believe it.

I think in the end that actually helped as we had no preconceived ideas about what to expect so even though the conditions were bad we didn't know any better and so just ploughed on.

Special mention should also be made for Kay who had the task of babysitting one very anxious Robyn Payne throughout the race. I think Clare very much appreciated having them both standing there on the beach as she ran up to the finishing line.

That's enough from the support crew perspective (we had it easy) read on for Clare's report from the water where the real hard work was done.