

GARY EMICH SWIMS THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE ROTTNEST

THE ROTTNEST CHANNEL SWIM is an annual open water swimming event off the coast of Western Australia, near Perth. It is open to solo swimmers and teams of two or four. It is one of the largest open water swimming events in the world, approximately 20 kilometers (12 miles).

The Aussies In Action website, online results, show Gary Emich in the solo category, male (we know that), Gun Time 08:45:43, swimming 27.22 minutes per kilometer in the February 21, 2009 event. But the real story came in Gary's email the next day. The subject line read: Rottnest – Good News – Bad News – Good News.

GOOD NEWS

“The water was warm - 73 to 74 - so cold was never an issue and there was a very strong offshore breeze right from the start (18-20 knots). In fact it was blowing us across so well that I covered the first 15 kilometers (9 miles) in 4 hours and 20 minutes. And at that point I was thinking ‘hot damn!’”

BAD NEWS

“That same wonderful northeast offshore wind that was blowing us across was also blowing all 800+ soloists and relays south, south, south! The last 5 kilometers ended up taking me longer than the first 15 kilometers - 4 hours and 25 minutes.

All of the swimmers had to swim

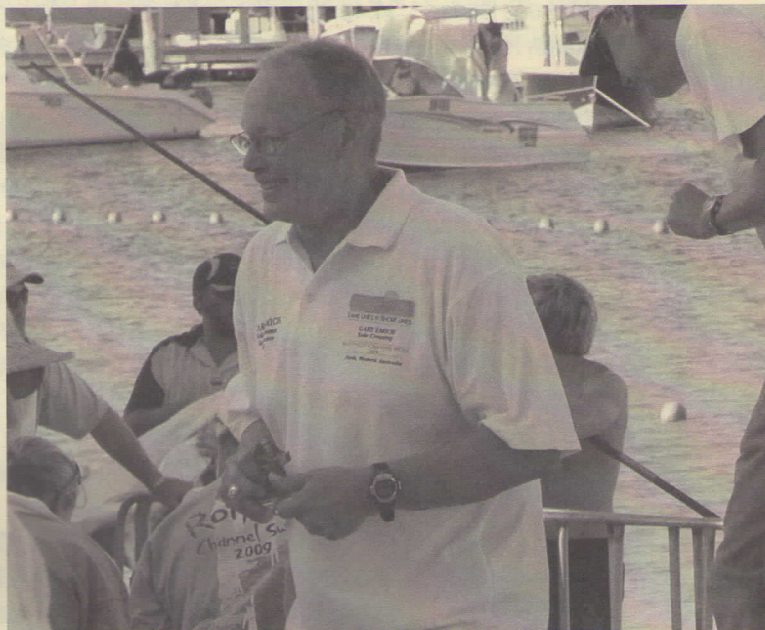
headlong into currents and wind as we inched our way back up to the finish line. The total swim with detours and all was 13.78 miles (instead of 12). I knew I was in trouble, but I went into the ‘I’m not going to quit’ mode. And it’s here where I could feel all the positive energy from everyone flowing in across the Pacific.”

CONGRATULATIONS GARY!

“I finished in a time of 8:45 which was 79th out of slightly less than 100 male finishers. Considering I’m 58 and several of the guys were former Olympians - I’m very happy with my time and with my finish.”

Gary also would like to acknowledge how the Aussies go

out of their way to make visitors feel at home. “I started referring to my kayaker and support crew - Libby and John O’Neill - as Mum and Dad. The 35 year-old grade



Happy Gary with his medal

school teacher and her 43 year-old grade school principal were outrageously supportive.”

“Besides volunteering to be my crew for an entire day, they made up special race t-shirts for us

(adamantly would not accept payment), snuck payment of the pre-race dinner in on Peg and me while we weren’t paying attention, arranged for Peg’s out-and-back ferry ride to Rottnest and my return, and then insisted on buying us a celebratory dinner on Rottnest that night. If anyone ever wants to do Rottnest, I can recommend the best support crew in the whole world - bar none.”

PAULINE YECKLEY



Swimmers and kayakers at the start