



ILDSA Observers

Channel swimming is a fantastic sport to be involved in and a swim is such a feat of endurance, it really is a pleasure and a privilege to witness first hand!

Marathon swimmers embrace the challenge of crossing wild, open bodies of water with minimal assistance beyond their own physical strength and mental fortitude. There are ways to make the sport easier, but marathon swimmers consciously eschew them. Marathon swimmers take pride that their achievements can be meaningfully compared to the achievements of previous generations, because the standard equipment of the sport has not changed significantly since 1875. Defined by the Marathon Swimmers Federation;

The role of an observer is to independently witness a swim is completed as stated above and to document it sufficiently to allow the ILDSA Recorder to review it and to subsequently ratify it to the list of successful swims. You are encourage to engage with all on board and to complete a detailed report for submission.

Please read the ILDSA rules and ask us any questions you may have ildsairland@gmail.com

Brief summary of your role as Official ILDSA Observer

Pre swim

Confirm swim date, meet time, meet venue and solo / relay team detail

Equipment you will need to take with you

ILDSA observer report, a stopwatch, thermometer and anemometer. You should take with you, pens, clipboard, whistle, sun cream, battery pack for changing phones/watches etc., any medications you take, clothes for all eventualities, food, and drink.

Swim day

Travel to the port. It is your responsibility to travel safely and we cannot be liable for loss or injury at this stage.

Meet the pilot and swimmer at the dock. The time will completely depend on the tide. The hope is most swims would go through the day but certain tides and routes require a very early or late start and may go through the night. You are now under the duty of care of the pilot. The pilot has responsibility for the swimmer and all onboard the vessel. You must obey their instructions at all times. All of the swims are tide dependent for the start times so really important not to be late!

Introduce yourself, put on your lifejacket, listen to the safety briefing and commence the completion of your paper work.

Transit to the swim start on the boat. If you do not know how good your sea legs are, sea sickness tablets are a really good idea.

Once at the swim start, the swimmer should get ready with the help of their crew. For a swim to be ratified, it must only use "standard" equipment, that being a swim suit that must not extend onto the arms, neck or past the knees. A standard pair of goggles and swim hat. The swimmer can use ear plugs and a nose clip if they so choose and lights and or glow sticks can be attached to the goggles and swim suit in the dark. Nothing can be used to gain an advantage, i.e., for warmth or buoyancy. No neoprene, no double hats, no technical swim suits designed to increase speed. Sun cream and lubrication is acceptable. Any deviations should be noted in the ILDSA Observers report. The swimmer should not wear a watch as this can be deemed to be gaining an advantage. Complete the pre swim check section of the ILDSA Observers report.

Once the pilot is ready to commence the swim, the swimmer will enter the water and swim ashore. They **MUST** clear the water, i.e., they should walk above the tide line and the swim **MUST** start from the mainland, an island or rocky outcrop is **NOT** acceptable. Man made structures extending into the water are not acceptable (i.e. a pier). A slipway is acceptable. Once above the water, the Official start is at your whistle and the stop watches and GPS tracking should commence. The stopwatch should now run until the swim finishes, it cannot be stopped or paused for any reason. From this moment on the swimmer must **NEVER** touch the boat or another person. They cannot gain an advantage by holding onto anything buoyant thrown to them, and they must be moving under their own power at all times.

The swimmer will swim back towards the boat, take up station on one side and follow the boat away from shore.

ILDSA Observers Report

The ILDSA observer report should to be filled in at least once every 30 minutes from the start. It is a **REALLY** important document to prove the swim took place as claimed. Once an hour is a minimum and it can be completed more often, make sure the time stamps are correct. If more space is needed for notes, several lines can be used but again **update the time stamps**. This form may get a bit messy on the boat, this is expected, just do your best!

Stroke rate can highlight a tiring swimmer and also a hypothermic swimmer. Your role is to observe but any significant changes.

Pictures and video. Try and get in the habit of when you make your observations, snap a picture and a quick video. We require these as evidence to help the ratification. You are better to have more than you need and delete them than not have enough!

Feeding. A marathon swimmer needs to take on nutrition, this is usually done from around 1 hour and then every 30-60 minutes. Every swimmer will feed on different things with different intervals and different methods! They **MUST NOT** touch or hold onto the boat during the feed. A swimmer

will usually be signaled to come close to the boat by their crew and either a bottle of cup thrown or passed to them. This is often on a line so the crew can reel it back in. Note down in the log the feed times and what they are feeding on. Painkillers and prescription drugs are sometimes given, note anything taken in the log. These are sometimes passed directly to the swimmer on a small boat. Providing the swimmer doesn't hold on (to person or boat) this is acceptable.

Support swimmer. Support swimmers are allowed but there are certain rules and the pilot must agree to two people in the water. They must not swim for more than a one hour period and they must not touch the swimmer or swim in front of the swimmer (so as to not gain an advantage from drafting). Support swimmers should be monitored closely by the observer and recorded in the log. Any deviations to the rules must be recorded in the log.

Swim finish. At the end of the swim the swimmer MUST clear the water un-aided. You should not stop the watch until there is no more water behind them, i.e., they cannot finish on a rocky outcrop or island. The only exception is on safety grounds. If the swim finishes on slippery rocks in the dark for example, it would be un-safe for them to clear the water (especially after a long swim). In this instance a touch is sufficient but there must be no more water behind the point they touch (i.e., a rocky outcrop is not acceptable). A slipway is acceptable. A tidal island is only acceptable at low tide if it is connected to the mainland at the time of arrival. If the tide is in and there is water behind the island, they need to swim to the mainland. Complete the log with time of day, position, stop watch time and stop the GPS recording device(s). Again we highly recommend photographing the log! The swim is now complete and the swimmer can touch other people and the boat. The pilots decision is final regarding a safety call for a swim finish point.

The boat will either have launched a dingy, sent in a safety swimmer or if the conditions are good, let the swimmer ashore alone. The swimmer will make their way back to the boat, and get out. It is the boat crew and pilots responsibility but the swimmer should be encouraged to get out of their wet clothes into warm dry gear quickly. Their condition should be monitored by everyone until they are safely back ashore.

Safety. The pilots are all experienced at taking swimmers and problems during channel swims are rare, but the Pilot, swimmers crew and ILDSA observer all need to be focused on the swimmer at all times throughout the swim, monitoring the swimmer and keeping eyes on them. Try not to distract the pilot unduely but DO report anything you may notice that the pilots either may not have seen or you think could be significant. The pilots should have Emergency Action Plans (EAPs) should anything untoward happen. In this scenario follow their instructions.

Should a swim stop for whatever reason, the time and position should be recorded and the log finished.

Relays. A relay swim can be made up from two or more people but other than changing swimmers, the rules are the same as for a solo. The team should nominate their order at the start (record this in the log). Each swim should be 60 minutes long and the changeovers completed as quickly as possible. When the pilot is ready, the new swimmer should enter the water and swim AROUND THE BACK of the active swimmer in the water and overtake them on the outside to ensure the full distance is swum. At this point they become the active swimmer and the first person

can come back to the boat and climb out. The active swimmer CANNOT touch another person or the boat so the two swimmers should never touch on changeover. Times and swimmer names should be recorded in the log. The order of a relay CANNOT be changed and neither can the time interval. Either scenario would mean the swim is not eligible for ratification.

Complete the swim (this can be a REALLY long day so make sure you have provisions and clothing for all eventualities)

Transit back to port.

Post Swim

Once back home, you need you to write up a summary of the swim in your ILDSA bservers report.

Once ready, compile the pictures, video and track, log and report for submission to ILDSA.

Submit your images and ILDSA Observers report via the online system

Once submitted the ILDSA Recorder may come back to you with questions.

ILDSA ask you to confidentially shred the original report or post it to ILDSA 101 Camlough Road, Newry N.Ireland BT35 7EE

Any questions contact ildsairreland@gmail.com