

Round Trip Angel Island Swim

Sunday, July 12, 2015

Swimmer: Evan Morrison

Pilot: Paul Saab

Observer: Cathy Delneo

Boat: Miller Time (a.k.a. Big Red)

Course: South End Rowing Club beach, San Francisco past the west end of Alcatraz Island, toward the west end of Angel Island, into Raccoon Straights on the north side of Angel Island, then back to San Francisco on the east sides of Angel Island and Alcatraz Island, finishing on the SERC beach.

Jump: 4:49 am

Notes:

We were aware that 3 vessels were scheduled to come through the Golden Gate, with the first scheduled to be in the incoming channel (between Alcatraz and SF city front) around 5:30 am. This led to a slightly earlier jump than planned.

4:49 am – Swimmer walked into smooth and calm water at the SERC beach

5:08 am – 64 strokes per minute

5:20 am – 1st feed, about ½ green bottle

Swimmer breathes right, so pilot positioned boat on the swimmer's right. Stayed parallel to the swimmer as he crossed from the opening of Aquatic Park in SF to the west side of Alcatraz. Swimmer made good progress, very little communication was needed.

Sighted on red and green buoys marking the opening of Raccoon Straight, left of Angel Island.

Inbound vessel passed behind us in incoming channel.

5:35 am – 64 strokes per minute

Wind from the west, slight texture on the water. Big dark cloud over Sausalito.

Outbound vessels (Northern Practise and another) headed for deep water channel (between Alcatraz and Angel Island). Vessel Traffic (VT) said they were likely to turn near our anticipated location south-west of Angel Island as they headed for the GG Bridge. Adjustment to course might be necessary.

5:40 am – Swimmer's goggle straps came loose, he stopped briefly to adjust them

5:45 am – 2nd feed, remaining ½ of green bottle

VT indicated that Northern Practise outbound at the Delta-Echo span of the Bay Bridge. Paul called VT on radio to find out their course. Learned we would

likely be in the vessel's path. Tried to reach Northern Practise repeatedly with no luck.

Told swimmer to head in toward Angel Island rather than to keep westerly course as planned. Intended to get swimmer out of shipping channel despite likely addition to time in water. Told swimmer to pick up the pace, needed to clear deep water channel.

5:57 am – 66 strokes per minute

6:06 am – Northern Practise visible and pointed at our zodiac, though about 10 minutes east of our location. Paul tried again to raise captain on the radio, with success. Told captain of our location, that we would pull swimmer if necessary. Northern Practice turned its course slightly, passed behind us at a safe distance.

6:07 am – Paul spotted a jumping dolphin/porpoise.

6:14 am – Slight chop

6:15 am – 3rd Feed: blue bottle, drank about ½

Pilot instructed swimmer to sight on the white building to the left of Harding Rock

6:20 am – 62 strokes/minute

6:28 am – Positioned boat to left of swimmer. Communicated need for change due to high number of fishing boats in the Raccoon Straits.

6:32 am – Pilot put boat in neutral to check current speed. GPS app on iPad indicated the boat was moving 2.4 mph in neutral in Raccoon Straits.

6:45 am – 4th Feed: ½ pink bottle

6:47 am – A honey bee landed on swimmer's parka. Pilot freaked out. I refused to hurt the honey bee. Blew gently on its wings, it flew away. Moving 1.4 mph in neutral at that point.

6:54 am – sea lion friend poked up head in front of swimmer, then in back of swimmer

6:58 am – 62 strokes per minute

Water conditions calm with tiny ripples

Boat still making forward progress in neutral, but slower now, just about .3 mph

7:03 am – Talked with VT and checked in a little before Pt. Simpton

7:06 am – VT said inbound tug Pacific was going in the deep water channel.

7:07 am – boat moving .00-.03 mph in neutral

7:15 am – 5th Feed: protein drink (entire bottle) and 2 Advil

Swimmer asked for dark pair of goggles, made switch.

Found thermometer in dry bag: 63 degrees F on east side of Angel Island

Water texture: smooth in the lee of Angel Island with tiny ripples

7:42 am – 6th Feed: pink bottle, about ½ of it (it had been refilled) just before Pt. Blunt

Vessel (Yasa Golden Phosphorus) passed Pt. Blunt in the deep water channel as swimmer fed

7:51 am – encountered chop as soon as we left the lee of the island.

Sighting on the west side of Alcatraz to get to the east side

7:55 am – chop lessened after a few minutes, seemed like it had been caused by currents meeting on two sides of Angel Island.

7:55 & 7:58 am – Dolphin/porpoise spotted

8:05 am – Realized we were being pushed east far harder than we had realized. Sighted on Palace of Fine Arts to get back on course

8:10 am – seal floated by, seemed to be playing with a fish as he ate it

8:15 am - 7th Feed: 1/3 green bottle

8:18 am – 60 strokes per minute

Wind was strong and was pushing the zodiac toward the swimmer, so the boat fell back slightly from the swimmer, still able to be seen easily when he breathed.

8:34 am – Tiny white caps, west wind. Pilot and observer added coats and blankets to keep warm.

8:39 am – 8th Feed: 1/3 green bottle

Small chop

8:47 am – 60 strokes per minute

9:00 am – 9th Feed: ½ bottle

Water temperature: 61 degrees F

9:07 am – 58 strokes per minute

9:10 am – Sea lion spotted behind swimmer

Due to the strong Flood current, the swimmer was carried further east each time he stopped (to feed or discuss course) after leaving the shadow of Angel Island. Pilot noted that to keep a straight line course as originally planned, the swimmer and pilot would likely have needed to sight on the north tower of the GG Bridge or even Sausalito. (The pilot noted that previous day's flood had also been very strong, he had piloted a SERC club Alcatraz swim that day.) Planned to encourage the swimmer to swim straight at the island when parallel

with the sign to take advantage of the decreased current in that spot, which is protected from the current in a floor tide.

9:16 am – Evan stopped to ask a question about the course and sighting points and quickly lost ground. Humor still high, jokingly asked, “Are we there yet?” as he began swimming again.

9:19 am

Ferry approaching island, swimmer pointed straight at Alcatraz.

9:22 am - .4 miles from Alcatraz island (per google maps)

The swimmer was making steady but slow progress toward Alcatraz during this time.

Only when the swimmer got into the lee of Alcatraz Island (almost parallel with the Ferry dock) did he begin to make good progress toward the island.

9:30 – 10th Feed: 1/3 bottle

Abeam sign, sighting on Palace of Fine Arts.

Water temperature 62 degrees F.

9:43 am – 56 strokes per minute

Paul called the Spicer, another SERC club zodiac, on the radio to find out about the current along the shore. Barry Maguire, piloting Bobby O’Malley Daley and Jeff Everett in a 6 hour qualifying swim, indicated that he couldn’t talk because he was busy, “I have to feed the animals.”

9:47 am – Barry called Paul on the radio from the Bravo tower of the Bay Bridge, reported strong flooding there. No end to the flood in sight.

10:01 am – 11th Feed and the well has nearly run dry. Combining dregs of bottles to make up next feed, and supplementing swimmer’s feed with observer’s favorite flavor of Gatorade, Lemon Ice. Great sacrifices were made.

Pilot and observer noticed a giant shadow on the water and became concerned. Soon realized it was a Geico banner being dragged by a tiny plane, which had been inaudible initially. Danger averted.

10:05 am – Swimmer now heading straight for shore with intention to crab along the waterfront, where the current should be less strong. Abeam Pier 39.

10:06 am – Barry called from Spicer to say that there was an ebb on shore close to the Ferry Building, west of our location. Encouraged swimmer to head in directly.

10:07 am – 58 strokes per minute

10:22 am – Swimmer close to the Pompanito submarine, which is parked between Pier 39 and the Jeremiah O’Brien (J.O.B.)

10:25 am – Final Feed at the bow of the J.O.B.

Wind strong in our faces

10:28 am – Swimmer at the stern of the J.O.B. heading across to the creakers
(east end of Aquatic Park Breakwater)

10:30 am – Swimmer at the creakers

Water temp 62 degrees F.

Swimmer at Opening: total time elapsed in swim 5 hours 57 minutes

56 strokes per minute abeam the Balclutha

Swimmer on the beach – 5: 57'44"70 stood on beach, cleared water

Swim complete.