

Documentation Submission

Sarah Eismann – Bermuda Circumnavigation

Swimmer Biographical Data

- full name – **Sarah Eismann**
- age on date of swim – **39**
- nationality - **American**
- city & country of residence – **New York, NY USA**
- previous marathon swims completed
 - **10.5 mile Trans Lake Tahoe Viking Swim**
 - **9.5 mile ‘Au‘au Channel, Hawaii (Lāna‘i to Maui)**

Support Personnel

PDF attachment: [SarahEismann_BermudaCircumnavigation_6-19-2018_ContactInfo_SignaturePage.pdf](#) (2 pages)

- Names of everyone involved in the swim, and each of their roles.
 - **James Adams – captain**
 - **Dylan Ward – co-captain**
 - **Janine Kao – lead observer**
 - **Amanda Short – support observer, support video**
 - **Eric Rice – support crew, video/photography**
 - **Matthew Eismann – support crew, feeds**
 - **Roy Eismann – support crew**

Rules

- List of any swimwear and equipment not specified as “standard equipment” under the MSF Rules of Marathon Swimming.
 - **All swimwear and equipment was Standard Equipment under the MSF Rules of Marathon Swimming**
 - **regulation textile swimsuit**
 - **goggles**
 - **latex bathing cap**
 - **swimmer adventure lights**
 - **swimmer grease (Desitin)**

Swim Report completed by independent observer

PDF attachment: [SarahEismann_BermudaCircumnavigation_6-19-2018_SwimReport_CoverSheet.pdf](#) (1 page)

Route Specification

- Start location: coordinates (latitude, longitude) and name/description (if applicable).
 - **32.390068, -64.674317, St. Catherine's Beach, St. George's Island, Bermuda**
- Finish location: coordinates (latitude, longitude) and name/description (if applicable).
 - **32.389173, -64.674152, St. Catherine's Beach, St. George's Island, Bermuda**
PDF attachments: [trackRS_start-end_satellite_view.pdf \(1 page\)](#)
[trackRS_start-end_standard_view.pdf \(1 page\)](#)
- Distance of minimum repeatable route connecting the start and finish.
 - **37.3 statute miles**
PDF attachments: [Bermuda - Google Maps_swim-route_Map-view.pdf \(1 page\)](#)
[Bermuda - Google Maps_swim-route_Satellite-view \(1 page\)](#)
[trackRS_actual_route_satellite_view.pdf \(1 page\)](#)
[trackRS_actual_route_standard_view.pdf \(1 page\)](#)

Basic Swim Facts

- Start date and time – **Tuesday June 19, 2018, 6:08:00 ADT**
- Finish date and time – **Wednesday June 20, 2018, 13:36:07 ADT**
- Local time zone – **Atlantic Daylight Time**
- Elapsed time of swim (hours, minutes, seconds) – **31:28:07**
- Log of regular timestamped observations
PDF attachment: [SarahEismann_BermudaCircumnavigation_6-19-2018_ObserverLog.pdf \(12 pages\)](#)

Narrative

Narrative account of swim planning and execution, by Sarah Eismann (swimmer)

Inspiration - I started planning this swim in May 2017. I was a year away from my 40th birthday and decided that I wanted to celebrate the big milestone by challenging myself to do something I never thought possible. I wanted to push myself beyond all boundaries (physical, mental, emotional) that confined and defined me. I wanted to see what I was made of, so to speak, what I was capable of, what boundaries really existed for me. Because my birthday is in June I was looking for a swim in warmer waters than my native New York, one whose length would push me beyond my comfort zone, and one that had not been done by many people. I was interested in finding a swim that not much was known about. I was interested in doing research about the area and the swim and finding my own way through the swim and through the adventure. I wanted a swim that I could totally immerse myself in: heart, body, and soul.

A colleague suggested Bermuda, and everything just fit so well. In addition to everything I was already looking for, Bermuda is a beautiful island with wonderfully supportive people and gorgeous swimming, so I felt like a winner before I even started.

Planning – Before this I had done open water swimming and had been an endurance athlete but had never done a marathon swim. So I started by choosing a few smaller swims that I could learn from, figure out how to train, and learn the ins and outs of marathon swimming (Trans Lake Tahoe and the Maui Channel). I

voraciously read everything I could on the MSF Forum and asked about a million questions of everyone I knew in the open water swimming world. The more I learned the more I realized I didn't know! So I just kept asking questions. I really started from the ground up, as a total newbie. But everyone I encountered and pummeled with my inquiries was amazing; giving me so much advice and encouragement. I was extremely lucky. I put together a training plan for the first few months based on all the advice I had gotten from other swimmers, a great outline I found online from Kate Vines, and my knowledge of endurance training. On the advice from a Forum post I hooked up with Infinit Nutrition (their individually tailored nutrition supplements changed my endurance training and swimming in so many positive amazing ways!).

Through lots of experimenting I found out doing feeds every 20 minutes worked best for me; longer than that and I got hungry and thirsty. One 20 oz. bottle of Infinit kept me going for an hour, that combined with peaches (I liked them for the solid food satisfaction, the comfort food taste, and the fruit sugar cut the salt water really well), Toms alcohol free mouthwash (also to help keep salt mouth at bay), and hot chicken soup when I got cold, made up my feed entourage. The Infinit and mouthwash were in squeeze water bottles, and the diced up peaches and chicken soup were in shaker bottles. All the bottles were attached by loops to carabiners, which were in turn attached to a thick fishing line hoop. This was thrown out to me on a long rope, making it easy for me to access whatever bottle I needed and for my crew to haul it back in when I was done. I also had a shaker bottle of tums, a small pill case with Aleve, and a small dry bag (in case new equipment needed to get to me: goggles, bathing cap, swimmer lights, etc.) that my crew kept on the boat in case any of those were needed.

In November 2017 I started planning the actual circumnavigation with my captain, James Adams of In Depth Bermuda. His expert knowledge of the waters around Bermuda gave me so much confidence; I knew I had found the right captain for the job. Because the reef around the island is so extensive we didn't have to worry about large predatory marine life (and boy was I relieved!), it also meant staying close to shore was advantageous for most of the route. Two areas where James had to slightly alter the route because of extremely large, shallow reef sections making it impossible for his boat to pass through were along the most south-eastern tip (right before West Whale Bay) and circling around the tip of the "hook" (the Royal Naval Dockyard and the opening to the Great Sound). There we had to shift the route so we were going directly east in order to circle around the southern end of the reef barrier and come up along the eastern side of it before we could head back north towards our finish point of Fort St Catherine. Another big factor in mapping the swim route is the fact that the South side of the island (the long straight stretch of beaches and cliffs between St. David's Island and Church Bay) has less reef protecting it before it drops off to deep ocean. All around the island the South Side is known for its choppy waters, unpredictable currents, swells, and winds. The first thing a Bermudian would say to me when they learned I was swimming around the island was "Even the South side?! Oh you better watch out there!" I read Lori King's 2016 swim account and mentally prepared myself for a rough swim in those waters. So because of this James wanted to make sure we completed the entire South Side in daylight. Nighttime was not the time to be navigating the reef in those kind of conditions. The resulting route choice was to start at first light at Fort St Catherine and go clockwise around the island giving us roughly 15-16 solid hours of daylight and getting the roughest part of the swim out of the way before heading into the dark and calmer waters. James and other avid Bermuda swimmers talked to me about the higher saline content of the waters around Bermuda (the reef is a huge contributor to this as well). I discovered it is much higher than most other ocean swims, and definitely higher than what I had swum and trained in up to that point. So I took this into account when experimenting with methods of counteracting the salt effect on my lips and mouth (which was why I added the peaches). I also experimented with my stroke, knowing I would be higher in the water, which would not only feel much different but would alter the effectiveness of my pull.

Starting in February of 2018 I shifted my training plan to the full throttle goal of a 40 mile / 30 hour event. Based on my average ocean pace I figured 30 hours was within the scope of this swim, especially considering some might be current assisted and some might be current hindered. I was hoping for 24 hours, but preparing for longer. For 2 months I built my mileage every week and then did a recovery week, maxing out at 60k/week (roughly 20 hours/week) for 4 weeks. I trained with two Personal Fitness Trainers and they helped me develop an amazing strength training workout that I did two days a week. They helped me learn how strengthening my upper back muscles stabilized my scapulae which in turn prevents them from “floating” during my freestyle which was causing my very painful frozen shoulder. Since working with them I haven’t had a single shoulder problem. At the end of that intense month I shipped myself off to Bermuda and, after months of planning, James and I did our first swim together, a 24 mile 15 hour 40 minute training swim. My longest open water swim at the time. It was a loop from the Royal Navy Dockyard up to the airport in St George’s and back. Originally the plan was to do the entire South Side as the training swim, the rationale being if we can get through the hardest part of the circumnavigation the rest will be a walk in the park. We also wanted to make sure we had enough daylight to get all the way down the South Side. But it was not to be. Mother Nature had other plans. She blew in a huge wind storm the day before the planned training swim. We pushed the swim off for two days and finally had a good window but not for the South Side. Despite all that James, myself, and my crew learned a lot from that swim that informed everything we did for the next month and the actual circumnavigation. The most important of which was, confidence that we could do it; that all the planning and training was right on track!

For the last weeks leading up to the circumnavigation I tapered my swimming, while still doing two days a week strength training. I prepared my feed bottles, bought tubs of Desitin, tested goggles, figured out how to get a new bathing suit to me while I was swimming (all I could think with that one was “If something so extreme happens that I need a new bathing suit I’ve got bigger problems! haha!” I wrote up instructions for my crew on what to do during feeds, and how the swimmer lights work, and what jellyfish to look out for (after being stung an excruciating number of times during the training swim I wanted my crew to know what they were looking for), and printed maps and created binders full of everything they could ever need to know for a 30 hour swim (still hoping it would only be 24!). I got my Spot Tracker ready, bought peaches, and chicken soup, and bottles of mouthwash. By the time I arrived in Bermuda for the second time I felt as ready as I could ever be! I arrived 5 days before the planned swim. Little did I know that Mother Nature had her own ideas of when I should swim around the island. James called me the day after I arrived and said we needed to move the swim up two days. Which meant I had one day to prepare, get my crew together, and then go...on the biggest, longest, toughest, scariest thing I had ever even thought of doing in my entire life.

4:00am Tuesday morning June 19th we loaded the van and set off for Fort St Catherine.

The Swim – The sunrise was gorgeous, but I only know that now because I’ve seen the pictures. Staying focused and thinking about the task ahead of me made it difficult to take in and enjoy the morning. I knew I was ready, I felt completely prepared. I was either going to finish or not. And I was fine with either. After a year of planning and training I was at the beginning of the moment of truth (a moment that would last 31 hours 28 minutes and 7 seconds). Circumnavigating Bermuda had never been an end in itself for me. For me the entire 12 months was the definition of a personally defining moment that just happened to include a crazy long marathon swim, the very epitome of life being a journey not a destination. If it happened that the swim itself could not be completed I still considered it a complete success. So there I was, covered head to toe in Desitin, looking suspiciously like Casper the Friendly Ghost, in the back of a small Bermuda fishing boat, with a crew and captain I trusted with my life, chomping at the bit to jump in the Atlantic and get swimming, and

having no idea how the next day and a half would play out. I had that inner feeling of dichotomy that comes with a long endurance event: that my life was on hold for the next day and half at the exact same time that it was speeding forward at an alarming rate.

We boarded at the dock in St George's and headed to the beach next to Fort St Catherine. I knew we were extremely well prepared, but having to move the swim up two days had put an extra edge of hurry and stress on everyone. We got as close to the beach as we could. My observer, Janine, read the rules and regulations, I hopped off the boat, swam to the beach, waved good-bye to my mom, gave the thumbs up, and we were off! (Even now thinking about that moment gives me butterflies.)

The first hour was a horrifically surprising mixture of tortures. The South Side was indeed very rough water. I felt like I was being tossed around in a washing machine, but it wasn't anything I hadn't experienced before and my body knew how to handle it. I rode down the back side of the swells and cut through the chop with a strong stroke. It made for slower going, on top of taking it slower to conserve energy for the long haul ahead, but that was not what I was worried about. The unexpected things were what made it so difficult. The wind had kicked up so I was immediately freezing and started shivering, my mental game was still kicking in so I had severe thoughts of self-doubt (wondering why I was even there), and the rising sun was directly in my eyes blinding me every time I took a breath. I couldn't believe it. I kept thinking if this is what the first hour is like I am so doomed! I pushed through the cold as long as I could but had to ask for chicken soup almost immediately. The sun was eventually too much and I had to switch to the other side of the boat, getting really angry at myself for not asking sooner. That was an unfortunate event later labeled "Sarah loses her *bleep* number 1". There weren't any others after that but I was super embarrassed, and really worried that if things were falling apart this early in the game how would the rest play out. (I later found out my captain and crew were worried too.) But the switch and the soup were instant fixes and I found myself feeling 100% better and hitting a stride and rhythm for the first time. This made me remember a mantra that had gotten me through some really tough training days "just keep swimming, it will always change" and I knew we were going to make it. It wasn't going to be easy, and there were probably going to be a hundred more unexpected things, but we were going to cross that finish line. So I took a breath, and just kept swimming.

Except for choppy water and low tide (co-captain Dylan Ward had to stand on top of the boat for a few sections to guide the boat around some dangerous reef), the majority of the South Side was uneventful. Just past Tucker's Town, the crew saw some Portuguese Man O'War, but James swung the boat around to be between me and the jellyfish and we passed by without any problems. I could see the sandy bottom the entire way and as soon as I got over my fear of opening my eyes in the water (yes you read that right, I close my eyes when they are in the water, but I promise I won't bore you with the details here, they are worthy of their own entire narrative) it was fun, and comforting, and relaxing to watch the reef pass under me (sometimes mere inches) and to watch the beautifully colored fish swimming in and out. It was a whole new world and experience for me! I thanked Lady Moana many times for such a fabulous adventure. I was actually very sad when I had to start closing my eyes again.

We passed beaches with people waving to us (my mom and friend were at Elbow Beach, I was so happy to hear they were there and waved at them even though we were just far away enough that I couldn't quite make them out), but they made me smile and kept my swimming happy and light.

About 6 hours into the swim my goggles started to leak very slightly. I was frustrated because my eyes started stinging from the extra salty water. I had to keep drying them out during feeds (which made feeds a little

longer than I had anticipated), and I knew I had a very long swim ahead of me. They had also never leaked in training so that added to the frustration; I thought I had done my research.

About 7 hours into the swim my bathing cap broke. I couldn't believe it! That had never happened to me before. Not even during lap swimming. So we got to test our replacement equipment delivery method. It took an extra few minutes during that feed, but it all worked perfectly! The new bathing cap was placed in the small dry bag which was clipped to the hoop with the feed bottles. I clipped my goggles (with the lights attached) to the hoop while I changed my bathing cap. I put the old cap in the dry bag (which by this time was very wet, haha). Put my goggles back on, finished the feed and got back to swimming. I was very proud of us! We were totally prepared for everything!

Unfortunately, I had to pay for all these small moments of taking extra time during feeds.

About 12 hours into the swim, we were close to finishing the South Side (just past Surf Side Beach), the sun was very low in the sky, nighttime was slowly creeping in on us and James came to talk to me during one of the feeds. He said we had 2 hours before darkness and we had to finish 6 miles of the most treacherous area before we would be in safe water. My heart sunk. I have never swam 2 miles an hour...ever. My fastest open water pace was a 37 minute mile, and that was in a calm lake. My mind started racing. I told James I have never swum that fast. I asked him what happens if we don't make it. In an amazing show of support and encouragement he said "just pick up the pace, you got this". After what seemed like hours of completely stressful swimming, split second feeds, watching the sun sink lower and lower, feeling like the coastline wasn't changing at all, and watching Dylan on top of the boat anxiously guiding through chop and swells, James came to talk to me again (near Sinky Bay Beach) "Only a mile, Sarah, but you can't be longer than 40 minutes, you gotta go fast, you can do it, it's just for this short section then we'll be in safe waters and you can relax."

14 hours into a 30 hour swim I sprinted. I sprinted my heart out. I thought of every person who believed in me and I swam for them. I thought of every person on that boat and swam for them. I thought of every person watching the track.rs and cheering me on and I swam for them. I thought of my mom on the beach and pulled the water harder. I thought of OWS friends and people on the Forum who had taken time to help me and I kicked harder. I thought of happy, swimming 6 year old Sarah and turned my arms faster. I thought of family and friends with me and long gone, my 5 year old student who drew me a good luck picture, the woman on the bus who called me an inspiration, the girls and young women who make themselves smaller because they don't believe they deserve to have a voice, my grandparents, my co-workers, and finally me, and I swam for all of them. I didn't hold anything back. There was no point. This was the use it or lose it moment. I cried. I cried tears of hope, tears of pride, and tears of courage. My goggles started filling up (which helped neutralize the salt water leaking in). It didn't matter. I was going to make it, and I wasn't doing it alone. I thanked Moana. Thanked her for letting me swim with her, thanked her for helping me and keeping me safe. Thanked her for getting us through the dangerous part and putting us in safe water before dark.

When James finally said we were good, we had gotten to Church Bay Park, we had made it, I was exhausted mentally, emotionally, and physically. And we were only halfway done.

The wind kicked up in the dark, which made it tough going again with lots of chop, and I got very cold. I didn't feel 100% well because of the physical exertion from the sprint. The first hour or so of the night was a little scary. The boat was getting a little farther away than I was comfortable with, a few times it was hard for me to see it which made me realize it was practically impossible for them to see me. I mentioned this to my crew and they stayed on top of it. The boat was also having battery problems so they ended up hanging a line of glow

sticks over the side that I was swimming on so I could see the outline of the boat better. They were able to turn off the harsh overhead lights (the overhead lights actually made it more difficult to see the boat, so I was happy with the change) and save power.

We did chicken soup feeds pretty much once an hour for the entire night swim. I also started doing caffeine feeds so when the sun came up again I would essentially kick-start my circadian rhythm when I went back to non-caffeine feeds. (I read a bunch of articles on endurance athletes and events lasting longer than 24 hours, January 2018 Jason Koop of Carmichael Training Systems put out a great article on caffeine, ultra-runners, and endurance athletes.) Except for a few extremely painful jellyfish stings (about one an hour while it was dark), and a minor incident of accidentally hitting an unlit channel marker (I was totally unhurt, and more freaked out by the shock of something solid in my way) the first few hours ticked by, mentally marked by feed intervals. I monitored my physical response to the stings; checking my breathing and heart rate. I had learned that sometimes the body will develop hypersensitivity to jellyfish stings after having been stung once. During the training swim I was stung by huge clouds of man o' war tentacles about 8-10 times over the course of about 2 hours; the stings covering the majority of my lower body and arms. So I was very worried that if I got stung during the circumnavigation I might present with breathing difficulties and other symptoms of anaphylactic shock. I had my doctor prescribe prednisone and an epi-pen, which my crew had on hand just in case the worst happened. Very fortunately, other than the stinging pain, I had no other symptoms. The soup helped ward off the cold. The wind eventually died down and the swimming was really beautiful and calm. The star filled night sky was incredible. I felt relaxed and was finding a good rhythm.

We rounded the tip of The Hook, The Royal Naval Dockyard, and started around the south end of the reef outcropping that we had to navigate around before heading north again to Fort St Catherine and our final straightaway.

17 hours, that's when my brain started filling in missing visual information every time I turned to breathe. I basically felt like I was hallucinating. It was not alarming in any way, but it did make for some very interesting and blink worthy moments. At one point my brain told me that everyone I could see on the boat was a giant Hershey kiss (no foil wrapping or little flag, just dark, triangle shaped objects). This "hallucinating" continued for the duration of the night swimming, and only abated when the sun came up and my brain could "see" and register everything again and didn't have to "make up" anything. Though once I did mistake a faraway cruise ship for a large block of floating Styrofoam...

One of the most frequently asked questions I get is "what did you think about for 31 hours?" It depended... Because I feed every 20 minutes the entire swim was marked by 20 minute intervals. Sometimes a song would pop into my head (Sam Cooke's *Chain Gang*, or *I will Survive* by Gloria Gaynor) and for several 20 minute intervals I would stroke and breathe to the beat and tune in my head. Other times focusing on the sounds of the water and the rhythm of my stroke and breath would carry me through a few feeds. Most of the time though thoughts would come and go, and I would just relax and let them cycle through of their own free will, not holding onto any particular thought, not trying to create any particular thoughts. Sometimes the thoughts were not very fun or pleasant, but other times they were very lovely. It was stream of consciousness taken to the extreme. The thought that I could do anything for 20 minutes, and just get to the next feed was what kept me going for most of the second day.

The sun rise was gorgeous. And I *was* able to catch and enjoy almost all of it this time. That was exactly when the wind kicked up again, and much harder than before. We were on the last 7 hour stretch, passing Deep Bay Beach, a straight shot North West along the North Side headed straight for Fort St Catherine and the finish

point. My body temperature plummeted and the swells got big enough that I couldn't see the boat until after each crest. I realized that for some reason my brain had expected the swim to be over once the sun came up, so there was a lot of mental fatigue to battle, and my stomach had been feeling off all night, like it hadn't quite recovered from the sprint. I was queasy, the nausea coming in waves. This had never happened to me before. I have never gotten sick or felt remotely nauseous on a swim, ever. It was unnerving. I had stopped the caffeine (I was a little suspicious that that's what had upset my stomach, even though I had trained with everything I was using). I also stopped eating peaches and chicken soup, and stuck to only the Infinit Nutrition until my stomach recovered. Which seemed to do the trick. In only about an hour or so I was feeling much better, but decided to stay on the reduced diet just to play it safe.

The swells kept coming, I kept telling myself "You can do anything for 20 minutes", and kept swimming.

With about 2 hours left in the swim, we were passing Bay Island, everyone could see the finish, and Fort St Catherine's walls rose up in greeting on the horizon. My lips and the tip of my tongue had been feeling like painful sandpaper for a while, but all of a sudden I went from one feed where my lips felt like normal size to the next feed where they felt like triple their size. The very inside of my mouth had also started to swell up. This was another thing that had never happened to me before. I was immediately alarmed. I understood what it was, salt mouth, but it had happened so quickly and on such a large scale that I was struck with a mild case of panic. What if everything kept swelling at that alarming rate? Would I eventually not be able to move my lips or open my mouth? Is *this* what would make the swim end just short of its finish? We were SO close! The only thing that kept the panic at bay was the fact that nothing *inside* my mouth was swollen. My throat was completely fine, I had no problems breathing or swallowing. So I clamped my mouth shut when it was in the water and made sure to use breath and saliva to get any errant salt water out when I breathed and kept swimming. I mentioned my fears to my crew (they also told me later that they had seen my lips and my eyes swelling and were getting concerned). They started looking for solutions. They mentioned the sugar in the peaches. That was when I realized I hadn't been doing the peaches for a while because of my stomach. So I went back to the peaches, and everything pretty much stayed the same for the rest of the swim. It didn't get better, but it didn't get worse.

Less than an hour to the beach and the finish point we started passing the fort. It's imposing size, huge defensive walls and fortifications took my breath away. Almost the entire swim I was between my boat and the shore, breathing towards the boat, but now I turned to breathe towards the coast so I could take in the beauty of the moment and fully comprehend what it meant. I started crying. We had done it. We had finished this amazing, epic swim. I could feel myself accelerating, pulling my body through the water faster. I could feel the strength and power in completing this swim with everything I had. And once more I sprinted. I cut through the water and found all my final strength for my crew and for myself. We were there, at the beach, a year of planning, training, suffering defeats and celebrating successes, and we were finally there. I was crying tears of immeasurable joy, and indescribable gratitude. My crew told me they were all crying with me.

So, I do this thing where I recite a Shakespeare quote that feels appropriate for the moment at the end of all my escorted solo swims. I had been worrying about this particular one almost the whole swim, because I didn't have a quote. But as we pulled up to the beach I just knew which one I was going to use. Puck's final speech to the audience at the end of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*:

*If we shadows have offended,
Think but this, and all is mended,
That you have but slumber'd here*

*While these visions did appear,
And this weak and idle theme,
No more yielding but a dream*

So I stopped the boat, asked everyone if all their recording devices were on, proudly and defiantly gave my quote to the world (positive no one could understand a word I was saying because of my swollen lips, haha), then turned and with fierce, dogged determination swam to shore.

The Physical Recovery – Almost immediately after clearing the water line on the beach, giving the thumbs up to my boat and tearfully, jubilantly throwing my arms in the air in ecstatic celebration the worst wave of nausea I have ever felt very suddenly and aggressively washed over me. I had to sit down right away. It just kept getting worse so I bade a very apologetic good-bye to the wonderful support people on the beach and swam back to my boat. Crazy thing, as soon as I got back in the water and started swimming again I instantly felt 100% better; total relief. And I hadn't realized that I was overheating until I felt cool again in the water. I kind of wanted to stay in the water and just relax and keep swimming/moving. Which I found out is actually the best way to cool down and get your body back to equilibrium after an extensive endurance event: keep moving and slowly take time to taper down to stillness.

Physically what I had to recover from was very thankfully not that much. The Desitin had done a remarkable job. I had quarter size chafing on the top of each shoulder from where my suit straps went over my clavicles, and very small chafing at the base of my neck (still trying to figure out what that was from, assuming bathing cap). I had very minor sunburn (slightly pink, warm to the touch), the equivalent to being in the sun for maybe 15 minutes with no sunscreen, on my arms, face, shoulders and upper back. The very tip of my tongue and inside of my lips had that scratchy, sandpaper, salt mouth feel, and my lips were swollen and slightly sunburned as well. And I had irritating jellyfish stings on both arms and my neck.

My muscles and joints recovered completely almost immediately. I was never sore and never stiff, not even the day after. I attribute this to the amazing, personalized nutrient supplement formula from Infnit Nutrition, and the strength training plan that my co-workers at the Marlene Meyerson JCC Manhattan helped me develop. Upon some advice about amino acids and endurance training (*Amino Acids: Their role in endurance training* by Bob Seebohar Jul 30, 2009, and from the Infnit team), I added one gram of amino acids to every hour of supplement and that made a huge difference in training and in my recovery.

By the fourth day after the swim my physical recovery was pretty much complete, and I was basically back to normal. Aloe had helped the sunburn which by day four was just a nice tan, Zyrtec and hydrocortisone cream had reduced the jellyfish stings to mere ghosts of their former selves, and Neosporin was helping the chafing heal nicely. The inside of my mouth healed relatively quickly and I was eating normally, though a little slower than usual, the next day after the swim. My swollen and sunburned lips took the longest to heal completely but even they were back to normal by the fourth day after the swim, Sun Bum lip balm and ice went a long way to help with that.

All in all I felt very lucky with the very modest extent of my physical "injuries" and how quickly everything healed. On day four I was so happy and excited about being my old self again.

The Mental Recovery – was a different story entirely, and as of the writing of this account (38 days after the completion of the swim) I am still struggling with symptoms of mental trauma.

I would like to start this section by explaining why I am including it in this narrative. This past year of marathon swimming changed my life. I am a very different person from the one who started the research and training 14 months ago. I discovered strength and courage within myself. I discovered ways of looking at life and ways of finding my way through it in a more positive and healthy way. I discovered how to be a more flexible thinker and person, and how to navigate life's obstacles in more constructive and productive ways. I discovered my voice. I discovered I like myself, and grew to love myself.

These are amazing things, and I have become a huge advocate for marathon swimming. I love and support the sport and I love and support the community surrounding it. I want to help both the sport and the community to grow; to become stronger. I want to help bring new swimmers to the world of distance and open water swimming. I want to not only keep learning from those who have so much more to teach me, but I also want to help mentor those who are looking for advice and community.

This is why I am including a Mental Recovery section in my narrative of my 31 hour Bermuda circumnavigation swim.

When I was doing my research for my swim I did not find anyone talking about mental recovery, so I was completely caught off guard when I started suffering from mental trauma. I didn't know it was a thing that could happen. When I was researching I found advice on getting sunburned, getting hungry, getting tired, salt mouth, swollen lips, feeds, peaches, mouthwash, shoulder pain, goggle problems, training, crew, boat, documentation, everything that helped me so much and without it my swim would have been impossible. But nothing about a swimmer's mental state after the completion of a long swim. It is very possible that what I experienced has not been experienced by many swimmers. But even if I'm the only one I think it's important to talk about because it is part of the sport. I feel that for the health of the sport (and the community that participates in it) anything that is part of being a marathon swimmer should be talked about openly with no judgement and no stigma. Just like everything else that is talked about on the Forum and in our messages and posts, it should be shared with compassion, kindness, and support. The same attributes that I have come to associate with everything that is the open water swimming community.

Four days after the swim ended I started suffering from symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. I started having stress and anxiety dreams that I was still swimming and couldn't stop. I couldn't sleep for about a week. I experienced severe depression. I also started having flashbacks when I would see pictures of the ocean or a beach or a boat on the water. Sounds and smells related to the swim still affect me. My stomach would turn, I would get nauseous and I would have to look away. I avoided swimming, afraid of what it would be like. The first few times I was able to get myself to swim again (just a few leisure laps in a pool) my brain was so disturbed by the sights, sounds, and feels, and remembering the association from the swim that I was extremely uncomfortable and had to stop. I had no idea what was happening to me. It occurred to me that maybe my brain for some reason had thought it was being tortured during the swim and anything that reminded me of the swim created these horrible "reliving" experiences.

After having accomplished the most courageous and challenging event of my life, during a time when I should have felt successful, proud, tough, an endurance athlete, I instead felt small, weak, alone, hopeless, despondent, and plagued by thoughts and feelings that I had no control over.

Like I said, I am still struggling with some of these symptoms. Some of it has gotten better with time. My sleep is basically back to normal, I am back to swimming (and it feels happy, like it was before the swim). The

depression still comes and goes but bouts are fewer and getting farther apart, it is no longer incapacitating and crushing, and I can manage it and come out of a bout easier. I still find it difficult to look at pictures of open water, beaches, or boats without an uncomfortable reaction, and every once in a while a sound, smell or a taste will give me a gut reaction.

I still don't quite understand all the ins and outs of why mental trauma happened to me on this swim and not on any other swim. I have come to the conclusion that sometime after the 16 hour mark (my longest swim before the circumnavigation) my brain started registering the events it was experiencing as mental trauma and went into "torture survival" mode. Which makes sense, because after 16 hours (which is roughly the time a person is awake during a normal day, after which the body and brain expects to go to sleep) my body and brain were forcibly being kept awake and engaged in repeating physical activity, two of the hallmarks of torture. The effects of which only started to show up after the physical recovery was basically complete.

I have a feeling, that like other survivors of PTSD, this will always be with me; that it is a part of the fabric of who I am as a human being now. I know I will eventually be okay with that, and I will continue to work my way through it and find healing on the other side. But this is also the reason why I believe the marathon swimming community should be talking about mental recovery. Because it changes who you are fundamentally as a human being, and anyone embarking on a marathon swim challenge deserves to know and understand everything that that challenge could potentially entail so they can make the best informed decision possible. That is why I chose to share my story. And for anyone who wants to share their story or just talk, my proverbial door is always open and I will always be happy to hear from you.

"In the Dark, just follow the Kayak."

GPS Tracking Data

Original/raw data from GPS tracking device such as a SPOT Tracker, Garmin watch, or smartphone app.

Accepted data formats: GPX, TCX, CSV, KML.

CSV attachments: [Sarah_Eismann_Round_Bermuda_TrackRS.csv \(9 pages\)](#)
[SpotTracker1.csv \(9 pages\)](#)
[SpotTracker2.csv \(14 pages\)](#)

GPX/KML attachments: [SpotTracker1.gpx](#)
[SpotTracker1.kml](#)

(PDF files just in case, these were the originals sent by SPOT)
[SpotTracker1.pdf \(10 pages\)](#)
[SpotTracker2.pdf \(14 pages\)](#)

Photos and Video

A representative collection of images and video footage, taken at various stages of the swim.

Dropbox link: <https://bit.ly/2Mt1i73>

PDF attachments: [SarahEismann_BermudaCircumnavigation_6-19-2018_Dropbox-Folders.pdf \(2 pages\)](#)
[SarahEismann_BermudaCircumnavigation_6-19-2018_Photo-Video-List.pdf \(6 pages\)](#)

Other Supporting Data (as available)

- Marine buoy readings during the timeframe of the swim (e.g., NOAA National Data Buoy Center).
PDF attachments: [MarineBuoyReadings_Station-41048_NOAA.pdf \(5 pages\)](#)
[MarineBuoyReadings_Station-41049_NOAA.pdf \(5 pages\)](#)
[MarineBuoyReadings_Station-41425_NOAA.pdf \(4 pages\)](#)
[MarineBuoyReadings_Station-FRCB6_NOAA.pdf \(8 pages\)](#)
- Local tide and current predictions for the timeframe of the swim.
PDF attachments: [Bermuda Esso Pier_StGeorges_Bermuda Tide Chart_6-19-2018.pdf \(1 page\)](#)
[Bermuda Esso Pier_StGeorges_Bermuda Tide Chart_6-20-2018.pdf \(1 page\)](#)
[Bermuda Tide Calendar_June 19-20_2018.pdf \(1 page\)](#)
- Media coverage of swim (newspaper articles, TV segments, etc.).
PDF attachments:
[Eismann takes to the oceans to _swim for Shakespeare_ - Essex News Daily_9-30-2017.pdf \(6 pages\)](#)
[nyt-fitness-goals_6-3-2018.pdf \(1 page\)](#)
[Actress attempts around island swim _ The Royal Gazette_Bermuda News_6-19-2018.pdf \(3 pages\)](#)
[Eismann Swimming Around Island For Charity - Bernews_6-19-2018.pdf \(5 pages\)](#)
[Daredevil completes round-the-island swim _ The Royal Gazette_Bermuda News_6-20-2018.pdf \(4 pages\)](#)
[Shakespeare, sharks and showing the ocean who_s boss - Essex News Daily_7-7-2018.pdf \(4 pages\)](#)
- Speed Plots
PDF attachments: [trackRS_SpeedPlot_Metric_km.pdf \(1 page\)](#)
[trackRS_SpeedPlot_US_miles.pdf \(1 page\)](#)