

COURTNEY PAULK – CHESAPEAKE BAY SWIM

May 27, 2021

OBSERVER NOTES: Heather Fairbanks

<u>TIME</u>	<u>COMMENTS / OBSERVATIONS</u>
07:27	Left marina aboard the Smoking Gun II
08:15	Crossed paths with Demetrios Agiou
08:45	Arrived and anchored at start. Lots of crab pots. Latitude 37.18983, Longitude -76.00493, Cape Charles. Application of sunscreen, butt paste, Vaseline. Courtney is wearing a pink latex cap (TYR), standard goggles, 1 green blinky light, blue TYR bathing suit of standard textile.
08:58	Observer reads rules of Marathon Swimmers Federation swims to all crew, including boat pilot and first mate.
09:12	Courtney swims to shore. "There's a person fucking swimming down there." From passing crab pot boat.
09:20	Courtney meets friends at beach at start, Chris Scheneck. Arne in kayak is 25 yds out off beach. Amy sets spot trackers. Courtney's Spot is located on front of boat, back-up Spot tracker is located on side (belonging to Amy Frick).
9:21:18	Courtney enters water and brings arms down to start the swim. Swim begins.
09:26	Courtney meets up with boat.
09:34	Boat speed is proceeding alongside swimmer at 2.6-3.0 knots. Keeping a 270 degree heading to make westward progress against current. Mostly keeping straight west.
09:50	Pilot's comment on swim plan: at approximately 2 hours, we should be half way between land and the first channel, and at that time approximately 2 miles off course. At 9:50am, we are only 0.25 miles off course. **Pilot discusses "off course" as distance from a straight line navigation to Grandview Island. Crew eats ham biscuits for breakfast. Hidden eating, of course. Arne is trying to keep kayak dry with sponge.

09:57 School of drum located below us. Waves are approximately 1 foot.

10:15 Pilot: current not too strong right now, 13.3 nautical miles (NM) to destination.

10:20 Getting slack tide, great westward progress. Current heading NW going up and will be SW coming out. N.B. get current table from VA Pilots and load into track.

10:26 Pilot says York River buoy is showing the tide turning at 3pm, looking like it might turn sooner. Pilot is digging the challenge/strategy/plotting.

10:30 Pilot: after last feed, Courtney is getting pushed North more, but good Westward progress.

10:40 Arne comes to boat for bottle switch and picked up Endurolytes.

10:42 12.7 NM to go. Getting a little choppier, some white caps.

10:55 2.67 NM since start. Pilot asked Matt where 843 is, the area code on his shirt. Matt has no idea what he is talking about. Waves still hitting Courtney from the right.

11:15 Arne can see NASA structure.

11:30 Pilot: "She's kicking ass." Calls the harbor pilot on departing cargo ship to alert that he has a swim and discuss harbor pilot's route.

11:37 Pilot: We're about to head straight into current. She's going to slow down facing it. Empty cargo ship underway with tugboat to pick up likely asphalt or coal.

11:42 Apple sauce given to Arne for next feed. Next feed will not be until 11:55am, because last feed took a while. Only 1 NM North of straight course. Doing well. Pilot: "Spectacular!"

11:53 Photo Op with cargo ships in background. Matt: "Heather, hold my nuts!" Matt and Heather are eating Amy's monster mix trail mix.

11:55 11 NM to go. Water is smoothing back down some.

12:00 Pilot considers strategy to head S-SW with Matt and Heather. 3 miles from the Hammer and entry into the channel. 250 degrees from present location is where we want to land. We have gone 4 NM in 2 hours and 45min. Pilot thinks 7-8 hours more to landing on Grandview Island Beach.

Incoming tide, not as strong as predicted. So, the concern is we will head too far North and then we don't get push we expected for the outgoing tide.

- 12:30 Goggles reset by swimmer. They have been upside down, but working okay until then. Courtney wonders when we will get past the ship anchorage and if we are taking lots of photos.
- 12:40 Spotted Cobia swimming at surface. Arne says it had been following Courtney. Pilot and first mate are very excited. However, they say it is the luckiest Cobia alive because we can't catch it right now.
- 12:50 F-22's fly over and we clear cargo ship Ultra Incahuasi. 9.87 NM to go. 5.4 NM swum. Pilot estimates under 10 hours, total for swim. He is joking about changing course to prolong swim and his per-hour charges.
- 13:00 Switch to top-of-the-hour and half-hour feed schedule. Courtney requests Tailwind only, with caffeine for next feed.
- 13:09 Not getting pushed north. Currently over a shoal. When we get over channel, we will reevaluate. Now swimming 260-262. Only being set over about 10 degrees North of course.
- 13:28 Dolphins playing ahead, 6 of them. And this time we really did see them. Have passed first section of anchorage ships.
- 14:06 Pilot: current not affecting us much at all. 7.3 NM complete. 8.0 NM to go. Incoming current got held up below us in the bay very strongly, so it didn't push swimmer north.
- 14:12 Approaching Chesapeake Channel and buoys 25 & 26.
- 14:25 Crew continues to eat and reminisce about the tub of "Millionaire" bars for English Channel 2019. Arne does some bailing with sponges. Arne has taken two Clif bars, jerky, Five Hour energy mixed into Gatorade. Heather is a fan of Model brand Gingersnaps. Lauren baked & brought brownies.
- 14:30 Current changing, wind may be swinging to east. This feed, swimmer not feeling great, a little nauseated. She requested egg salad on the ham biscuit rolls, taking the ham off of them and replacing with egg salad. After two bites, realized it wasn't a good idea as the bread got stuck. Requested no water next feed.

- 14:53 A big, nosy naval helicopter fly-by.
- 15:12 6.94 NM to go. 8.71 NM swum. On track. Pilot: Advise Arne that he needs to continue to head up and not drift too much while making adjustments/stretching to keep swimmer on course.
- 15:33 Pilot: "she's hitting Grandview, god damnit!" Crew dropped off next 4 feeds with Arne. Arne does not want to switch paddlers. Swim pace is roughly 2 mph.
- 15:42 Very light winds. Heading is a bit more north. Courtney's left arm is dragging a bit. Crew mentions it to her for correction. Boat drift is heading directly to Grandview Island.
- 15:45 We are in the Yorktown Channel.
- 16:02 Present course: should arrive Grandview ½ mile off coast. Pilot: Crew should be sure paddler doesn't dawdle too much and hold back swimmer.
- 16:10 Feed.
- 16:28 Crew gets a bit punchy. Lauren lies down on her stomach to look out the drain holes at the back of the boat to see if someone on the water can see the towers near Grandview. Matt captures a photo.
- 16:40 Matt realizes that he got the money dolphin leaping photo by accident. Crew calculates how much water is actually needed for feed schedule. We have a lot of water! It goes like this: 1 gallon water = 128 oz = 16 feeds if using small bottles of 16 fl oz. Small bottles = 16 ounces. Each bottle is 2 feeds. 8 hours of feeds=1 gallon. The crews' brains are hurting after these calculations, but no calculator was used.
- 17:17 Crew is starting to pack-up the feeds. Made the rest of feeds for estimated landing time.
- 17:20 Pilot: "Unless Arne fucks us, we're going to land on Grandview Beach!" Despite joke from pilot, Arne is much respected for his navigational skill, ability to hold a course, and iron butt. Crew debates what happens if Courtney wants to stay on beach after she lands and doesn't want to get back on the boat, which they expect. We agree she will find care with someone who has come to meet her, but postpone final plan until we have established accurate landing time.

- 17:31 Arne comes in for feed bottles. "Iron Butt" nickname has taken hold. Pilot teases Arne and says crew had been calling him "Mush Tush".
- 17:42 Amy: "If I crewed every day, I'd be as big as this boat." 2.9 NM to Factory Point, 3.0 NM to Grandview. Courtney wants to land Grandview.
- 18:18 2.25 NM to Grandview. Travelling at approximately 2 knots we would be there in 70 minutes.
- 18:40 Crew: "give her the apple sauce!" However, Courtney refuses to take it.
- 18:45 Current course plan is to parallel the shore, then we will turn just past Grandview and ride the current back to the beach. 1.54 NM to go. Courtney is swimming too much to shore, trying to get her back down to course and away from shore because current is going to be too strong to cross here. 346 feet north of our course. Boat crew is a big fan of our bag of chips, individual size. Crew is trying to stop eating. Lauren is not keeping up with Amy, Heather, and Matt on the food front. Crew affirms that continuous snacking holds off the motion sickness. This is a Kate Robarts strategy.
- 18:54 Courtney and Arne continue to edge closer to shore and boat tries to pull them back to course. 1.26 NM to go. We are hitting a current that is pushing Courtney away from our heading. Tough progress. Pilot estimates 1 more hour of swim time.
- 19:12 0.85 NM to go.
- 19:15 Pilot: Backing current is hard right now. We need to stay out in deeper water until we get in front of sand spit. If swimmer gets in shallow water, "she will get spun around and fucked". 0.75 NM to go.
- 19:42 We can see golf carts lining up on Grandview Island beach. Several people have come down to watch.
- 19:56 Arne spots a bald eagle as swimmer and paddler head into the cove and beach.
- 20:00:42 Courtney lands on Grandview Island directly by "the tree" and is greeted by lots of friends and neighbors. She is given beer and champagne. Courtney elects to remain on beach and boat departs to return to marina in downtown Hampton. Total swim time 10:39:24.