

ENDURANCE: 39TH ANNUAL SWIM AROUND KEY WEST



No troubles despite being in hot water

BY J.W. COOKE
Citizen Staff Writer

With 88-degree water to start the race, the heat certainly played a factor but the calm water also helped the more than 170 racers circumfer- ence the 12.5-mile journey during Saturday's 38th annual Swim Around Key West.

spective was really intense," said race director Terence White. "I think because the water was some clam we had a little bit less of a tidal push, so there were definitely pros and cons because the water was calm but hot. So, there were definitely some challenges there for the swim- mers."

"The heat from a swimmer per-

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J.W. COOKE/The Citizen
Cynthia McGauley, left, has her support team give two thumbs up during the 38th annual Swim Around Key West on Saturday.

Swim

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The heat certainly had an effect on solo race winner Nicolas Perfetti who had been practicing for the race swimming in pool for his hometown of Chicago.

"It was brutal," said Perfetti. "I've been training for over a year, but I haven't had any open-water training."

In fact, the former Indiana University swimmer said his last open-water race was in Key Largo at the age of 13. Now at 26, Perfetti said he

was just hoping to finish the race and never expected to pull out the victory.

"My friend and I wanted a reason to get back in the pool and start training seriously, so last November I decide to register for this race," said Perfetti. "I felt really, really good until about mile six. When for me it felt like it was getting really wavy, that's when the physical pain started to set in and I

started to notice everything. The sun was getting really hot, I was getting thirsty because there was salt water in my mouth and the waves, it was just everything."

Perfetti said despite earning the win, he was swimming in the middle of the pack with the relay teams and slow swimmers that entered the water early in the first heat. He said that his support kayaker told him that he was in the lead for the first time around mile seven and then again around mile 10, but winner of the 38th edition of the event said he was just focused on finishing.

"I didn't come here to win," said Perfetti. "Honestly, my goal was to finish because I've never done anything like this before. It's was definitely motivating to hear that about half way through the swim."

Perfetti completed the 12.5-mile race in four hours, 47 minutes and 38 seconds — three minutes in front of Jonathan Eckert of Tampa.

Carol Cashell of Cork, Ireland, took the top prize in the women's category completing the course in 4:41:48 ahead of Indianapolis resident Angela Kurdys, who finished in 4:57:12.

Neil Leyland won the male Master category in 5:00:01; Martha Hall won the women's Masters in 5:29:54; 62-year-old John Orcutt won the male Grand Masters in 5:13:03; and Laura Scarpinato won the female Grand Masters in 5:58:59.

"Sometimes in order to get a real fast time you need an international renown swimmer, which we have had a couple of times," said White. "We still had strong times in the Top 10, with a strong contingent of Irish swimmers and they really helped the times be faster."

Race originator Anna Fugina was unable to complete the 12.5-mile journey around the island, getting caught in the tide at Fleming Key as she did on her first attempt in 1977, but 64-year-old race organizer Bill Welzien was able to complete his 60th circumference of the Key West.

"Anna is in good spirits and will be



Perfetti



Photos by J.W. COOKE/The Citizen

Covered in zinc oxide Shannon Cleary makes her way through Cow Key Channel during the 38th annual Swim Around Key West.

back next year," said White. "Bill made it through fine and his goal is to get ahead and stay ahead of his age and that's going to be harder as he gets older."

More than 170 swimmers took part in either the solo, two-person and three-person relays on Saturday. White said the event organizers are already

looking forward to next year. "I think it's motivating to do races like this, and I definitely want to come back next year and also do other open water races," said Perfetti. "Two of my sisters both swam in college and they are really jealous I did this race, so we'll probably be back as a family next year."

fwcooke@keysnews.com



The crowds cheer for Stacy Fluhart as she finishes her solo swim around the Island. Fluhart was the final participant to return to the beach in the 38th edition of the event, finishing the 12.5-mile course in roughly seven and a half hours.