ENDURANCE: 39TH ANNUAL SWIM AROUND KEY WEST



Covered in zinc oxide, Bill Welzien prepares to enter the water for the 36th annual Swim Around Key West in 2012.

PROVING AGE IS JUST A NUMBER

Welzien going for 65th completion of 12.5-mile course

BY J.W. COOKE

Key West Citizen

KEYWEST — A total of 170 racers are scheduled to enter the 39th annual Swim Around Key West today including event organizer Bill Welzien, who will be Medicare card, whether you want to get it or not." looking to complete the 12.5-mile course for the 65th time at age 65.

"I always look for these little goals," Welzien said. December 2008. "So when I got to 60 in last year's race, I figured I only had to do two more in the fall and two in the sprig to slowing down. set it up for this."

on May 6, in six hours and 30 minutes, to set up his opportunity to make his swims match his age.

"Turning 65 is kind of significant," Welzien said. "When you turn 18 you have to sign up for the selective service and you remember that. When you turn 21 you are considered an official adult, so those are significant transitions and 65 is too. You get your

In order to get to this point, Welzien first completed 30 swims in 30 consecutive months beginning in

Despite reaching his goal, Welzien has no plans of

"The window is getting smaller so I want to get as He accomplished lap No. 63 on April 20 and No. 64 much through as I can," he said. "I have to bank as

See SWIM, page 4B

Continued from page 1B

know if I'll be out here at 85 still lot harder because vou're not as swimming around the island."

He said he plans to try one more tance." swim later this month and then three swims in July, under the blue break six hours, which would be moon.

"When I swim, it's either around most recent completion in April. a new moon or a full moon. because the tides are the best," the main thing is to finish," said Welzien said. "I will go for the first Welzien, who will swim with the full moon in the beginning of July, 11 a.m. wave of racers. There will the new moon in the middle of the be a first wave that begins at 10:30 month and the next full moon."

In fact, Welzien uses that same Smathers Beach. mentality for the annual race, as the most recent full moon was the entire field, which includes Tuesday.

enough," said Welzien, who is in Bridge by 2 p.m. his 13th year of organizing the race.

and forth for a 16-mile journey.

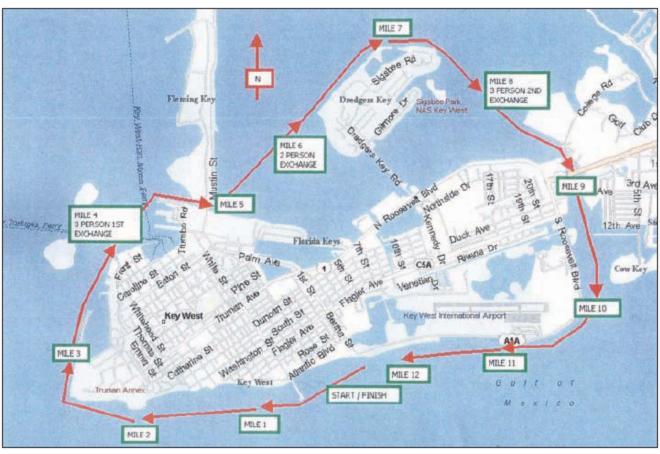
"Then first time I went there was after I finished the 30 swims in 30 months, so I was looking for something else to do," Welzien many as I can now, because I don't said. "That's freshwater, so it's a buoyant and there is no tidal assis-

> His goal for today's race is to roughly 30 minutes faster than his

> "If I get six and half that's fine, a.m. from the southern point of

Welzien said he is hoping to have 85 solo swimmers, through Key "We are a little late, but it's close West harbor and past Fleming Cut

"After that, the windows will begin to close because the current If Welzien is able to complete will begin to change," Welzien said. all the swims planned in the "We will have people stationed new months, he said he is likely on top of the Fleming Bridge so to return to the Sea of Galilee — we have an accurate count. If which he swam across, a total of somebody doesn't go though by through there, too." 14 miles, north to south — but this 2 o'clock, and the current starts



SPECIAL TO THE CITIZEN

Each number represents a mile marker for the 12.5-mile race that begins with the first wave of swimmer at 10:30 and the second at 11 a.m., from Smathers Beach.

get them out. We will have anoth- family obligations cut the entries but there are thousands and thouer group at the Cow Key Channel by 30. Bridge to make sure they all get

time trek the short distance back going against them, we will have his most recent goal as part of a Welzien said. "When you run the it fun for me."

manage, and the swimmers get to help each swimmer understand Initially, Welzien was going for feel like more than just a number," the race like I know it. That makes the committee boat there to help 200-person field, but injuries and Boston Marathon it's a big deal,

sands of people. Here, it's a lot "That's fine because it's easier to more personal and I really get to

iwcooke@keysnews.com