Understanding the Challenge is as important
Training for the Distance

Nuala Moore
Siberia 2012

- Tyumen-Siberia-Ice Swimming
- 1000m @ 0 degree
- 40 lengths of a shallow pool
- Ladder each end
- Stay alive for 20 mins
My Swimming Pool
Where I grew up swimming SW Ireland
My Adventures

- Relay team to swim around the Island of Ireland-5 swimmers 56 days (35 swim days)-1,330km without wetsuits ave 12 deg water
- Bering Strait Relay Russia to USA 2013
- Lake Zurich 26.4km Solo swim
- 1800m @ 3 degree Ireland 2013
- 1000m @ 0 degree x 5 times Russia air temps to - 30 degree
- 1000m @ 3-4 degree x 4times
- International Ice Swimming Association World Championship Silver Medal @ 0 degrees.
- Competed in Russia 10 times, China, Finland, Estonia, Argentina and UK
- Beagle Channel crossing Solo and Relay 3 degrees
- Southern Tip of Cape Horn - 1,7km @ 7 deg
- I started Ice for the adrenaline-I continued because of the education and the relationship for achievement with the mind and body.
The Longest Marathon staged Relay in the world-56 days 5 main swimmers

Expectation V Reality
What was the objective?

- To be the first team to circumnavigate the island of Ireland.
- 830 miles/1,330km
- 56 days-35 swim days
- 20th largest island in the world
- 5 swimmers
- Large marine and land team
- Coastal Community Support
Team is everything
Swimming through the Blasket Sound—huge water.
Exhausting on the Cork Coast
Never Risk A Bad Swim

“If we can’t you out-you can’t get in”
Aug 2nd-56 days later we became the first team in history to circumnavigate the Island of Ireland by swimming.
What was the challenge of Swimming around Ireland

- Back to back immersions in water cold as 12 degrees
- Not able to eat during the day
- Gave up drinking
- Gave up dinners for sleep at night
- Financial pressures
- Relationship collapsed
- Exposed to cold and wind on open zodiacs
- No recovery, No Physic, No Medicals
- In too deep to recognise the emotional collapse
- Institutionalised & Psychological
The Reality

The Ice was 2 inches thick
25m Pool

Shallow Water
Ladder each end
Could have stood up anytime

I was ‘stuck’ in my head
I kept thinking ‘breathe’
I got out at 150m

I got out because I had no idea how to continue
From Hero to Zero

- Intense pain
- Unable to breath
- Lost counting ability after 4 lengths
- Visualisation – unclear no path-what????
- Negative thought – where am I going?
- Fear of how far I could go?
- It was like being hit head on ..... Over load
What was it that stopped me?
150m is pathetic
Why did I get out?
How do you move forward when you don’t understand?

How to train for the event?

Train for what can stop you. What makes you get out of the water? What makes you give up? If you can swim the distance how come you quit?

I went to that place that challenged me
Whether you think you can or whether you think you can’t

You are right.
I broke down the challenge
I trained for what took my breath away
I decided to take on 1,800m at 3 degree

- 4 weeks later
- I trained for the temperature and the distance
- I trained for the recovery
- I stayed so medically strong
- I trained with HR Monitor, BP Monitor and Pulse Oximeters
Outcome of my Ice Mile in 2013

I trained to swim 1,800m @ 3 degree-

I did not understand the impact of cold water immersion on the body.
What was the challenge with Ice Swimming?

- Longer the time in the water - greater the changes to the body.
- Cold Shock
- Cold Water Swim Failure Hypothermia
- Recovery Post swim - depending on distance and energy
- Team - necessary for all.
Murmansk 100 miles inside the Arctic Circle 2013

• “You never know how strong you are until you have no choice”

• This was my time.
1000m @ 0 Deg
1st Irish swimmer and 6th woman in the world
It stripped me bare and broke me down
Pacific Ocean/Bering Sea
The Challenge

- First International Intercontinental Swimming Relay Across the Bering Strait
- Chukotka, Russia to Alaska, USA
- Commenced 4.24pm on Aug. 5th and finished at 4.52pm on Aug. 11th 2013
- 66 swimmers from 17 countries and 15 regions of the Russian Federation
- Distance of 86 km, actual swim distance 134km
The Hospital Ship

Working with a medical team made a huge impact on my understanding
What was the swim?

- Relay swim 10-15 mins @ time
- Water temperatures 2-10 deg
- 10 swims over 4 days
- Pretty basic
Unable to get back on board the boat
Separation from the Vessel
The only skill we needed was SURVIVAL INSTINCTS
Six days later we arrived into Wales Alaska from Russia
Wales Alaska

After swimming Relay from Russia
The Bering Strait
Swimming from Russia to USA
Real Challenges to swim the Bering Strait?

- Trust - language, different skills
- Team - Lose sight of the swimmer
- Transfers Zodiac to Ship to Zodiac
- Marine life
- Hypothermia & Cold Water Injuries
- Nutrition
- Stress
- Medicals & Blood Pressure
Vigilance is the Price of Safety
Plan for every eventuality
Post an ice swim 1km plus we are unable to function on our own- Chose you team wisely
Swim Failure Exists

The risks of slowing down
Work as teams as much as swimmers
What can we do as swimmers?

**Cold shock** - Understanding the response is expected and it can be managed.

**Cold Incapacitation/Swim Failure** - knowing limits and team-we can manage.

**Hypothermia** - No swimmer should die from Hypothermia from the time in the water - more than 30 mins.

**Post Rescue Collapse** - more than 20% of all people rescued DIE after the rescue so understanding and picking a team controls this area.. we are still learning.
NO SWIM IS DESIGNED TO TEST YOU MEDICALLY
What can effect your medical

- Age
- Diet
- Dehydration
- Travel
- Pre existing medicals
- Travel
- Alcohol
- Training
- Anxiety
- Medication
Challenges with Swims

- Triathlon - sometimes as short as 750m
- Ice - as short as 450m
- Extreme - as short as 1650m
- Channel - Time is the factor
- Open Water - Conditions
Triathletes tend to train for time and specific distance

Challenges can be multiple times greater

- Mass Starts
- Anxiety
- Suits too tight
- Running starts
- Weather
- Competition
Responses to Triathlon

• Staggered starts 100 every 5 minutes

• Deep water starts 5 min acclimatisation

• Straight line course no sighting issues or Buoy at end of the course after breathing regulation

• Angel Swimmers to ensure those challenged feel secure and pick up surface problems

• No Running starts

• Temp qualification
North Channel
Ireland - Scotland

• Secretary from 2012-2015

• Pre requisite: swim from Scotland to Ireland was to swim the English Channel prior to 2010—wasn’t enough

• My Objectives as Secretary:

1. Creating Understanding of the Challenge of the swim
2. Medical Understanding
3. Assessment swims at relevant temps
4. Stroke rates submitted in advance for teams
Developed the Ireland Ice Swim Program
Bring swimmers from Ave temps to 1000m @ 2 deg

1. Training
2. Preparation
3. Mental
4. Emotion
Found myself criticising outcomes

Started to Educate Myself

Create Understanding

Focus on Procedures

We have to be mindful of guilt and protect teams making the best decisions they can.
Exiting a marathon ice swim
not an unusual outcome
Ice Swimming—Water Sub 5 deg

- Cold Water Shock
- Cold Water incapacitation - Time limited
- Post Rescue Collapse
- Anxiety and Fear
- Cardiac issues, Blood Pressure
- Glamour, Sensationalism, Peer Pressure
- Medical
- Team needs
- Social Media pressure
- Emphasis on photos
IISA
Ambassador of the year 2015-based on safety

• Conferences in Vladivostok and Krasnoyarsk
• Forced changes in the constitution through driving the message of cold shock, cold water incapacitation and recovery
• Wrote my manual
Responses-We worked to manage the challenges

- In water starts with 30 sec acclimatisation
- Every swimmer over 200m has a ‘second’ to manage and recover (doesn’t always work)
- Team understanding of recovery involves picking up an semi unconscious, non cognitive swimmer
- No Diving
- No Tumble turns
- Head above water in turns
- Starts are over water starts not under water
- IISA allows Marathon Distance onwards at 0 deg
- IWSA has max distance at 450m with temps requirements
- Recovery on IISA Ireland-requested exit BP
Swimming past the point of recognition

- Unable to recognise signs and symptoms of Swim Failure
- Swimming to the Point of Unconscious
- Lack of Preparation
- Rewarding Failure to Prepare
- Social Media Pressure / Sensationalism of Results
- Sponsorship Pressure to Preform
- Cognitive Failing resulting from Cooling of the Brain
- Not understanding the challenge -Temperature or Distance
- Unable to respond to the changes in conditions or physical deterioration
- Team and Role Confusion
I asked about the swimmer’s decision making capacity

“Because of insidious hypothermia and the fact that most people find it impossible to judge their deep body temperature when in cold water leads to the conclusion that:

"Self-prescribed acute and chronic exposures to cold water may be dangerously wrong due to the inability to perceive body temperature"

Better have observers witness the swimmers and know the early signs and symptoms of swim failure”

Professor Mike Tipton
Understanding of the challenges

If we can’t get you out-you can’t get in
That should be the basis for all decision making of solo events
An area to think about?

Buoyancy and Body Composition
Role of medium of water

- Buoyancy - Seawater v Fresh
- Density
- Gravity of the Body
- Body composition - Fat/Muscle
Best Swimming Pools in the World
Perito Moreno Glacier - ARG
I’ve tested myself
Impact of Ice!!
Great Friends
Warm Hearts
Humility is Vital

The Cold will Take you
Losing me and not being able to get me back to the Vessel. ALWAYS Prepare for the Challenge and Not just the Distance
"Life is filled with certain obligations and responsibilities, but none more basic, primal or important then the responsibilities we have to ourselves and each other"

Thank you