

Lincoln swimmer postpones retirement

By Nick Hodge
Staff Reporter

After completing 11 months of extensive training for his successful swim of the English Channel, Lincoln's Kris Rutford has postponed his swimming retirement until after he swims around Manhattan Island at the end of the month.

On Aug. 5 Rutford became one of only 332 swimmers in history to successfully swim across the channel. Rutford's triumphant attempt at the channel covered a span of 27.6 miles in a time of 10 hours and 44 minutes.



Rutford

For Rutford's attempt to be deemed successful, he had to enter the channel at Shakespeare Beach in England, swim across the channel without any assistance and walk out of the water on the shores of France.

To make a legal, recognized crossing of the channel, Rutford had to hire a boat to guide him across. He also had to pay a fee of authentication to the

Channel Swimming Association, which governs all attempted crossings made in the channel.

Rutford, 28, said he was pleased with the outcome of his channel swim. Rutford said only about five people have successfully swam across the channel this year. "When I landed on the beach in France, there were people clapping for me," Rutford said. "It happened so fast, I really didn't know what had happened."

Rutford began training for his channel swim last September by swimming 50 miles. He increased his endurance to 110 miles in December, then swam 135 miles in June. As his workouts progressed, he made several long-duration swims, including a 12-hour swim at Branched Oak Lake.

Rutford, a 1981 graduate of Nebraska and a former member of the Cornhusker swimming team, said his

methods of training must have worked because his body felt good, despite the rough waters and distance of the swim.

"During the swim, my muscles were sore, but nothing I couldn't overcome," he said. "The next day, I felt good considering what I'd just done. My training must have been right on line. I feel fine now. I felt fine two days later."

The best tides for making attempts to cross the channel exist from July to September. During this period, the channel's water temperature ranges from 58 to 60-degrees. Rutford said the air temperature was equal to that of the water, which made it better on his body.

"The air and water temperature were the same so there was no great shock to my body, like if there would have been a 20-degree difference," he

said. Rutford said an encounter with jellyfish was one element of the channel that he knew existed, but one that he never thought would actually happen.

"It (jellyfish) was really a surprise," he said. "I never really thought I'd really run into any. Even though I never got stung, they did get me excited. I was scared, but I swam through them and just kept going. I only hit one or two."

Rutford said he had no plans for further swims until a man he met in England talked him into entering the Aug. 27 race around Manhattan Island, which will cover 28 miles.

"I didn't plan to do the Manhattan swim until this guy I met over there (England) talked me into, or encouraged, me into doing it," Rutford said. "I didn't decide to do it until I got back

to the states, then I called the guy up and had him enter me in the race."

Rutford said the short notice of entering the Manhattan swim makes him nervous.

"I'm a little nervous about the mental aspect of the Manhattan race," Rutford said. "I haven't had a year to think about this race like I did the channel."

"I don't know anything about this Manhattan thing, whereas I knew alot about the channel and what to expect. It'll be totally different."

Rutford plans to enjoy his trip and swim in the New York area.

"I'm going to relax during the Manhattan swim and enjoy it," Rutford said. "It's suppose to be enjoyable because of the skyline. Whereas, the channel had nothing to look at. It was a foggy day and I really couldn't see anything. It was kind of boring."

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