

# SWIM Q&A LORI KING

On 16 June, Lori King, 40, became the second person ever to swim continuously around Bermuda. She completed the 36.5 mile swim in 21 hours 19 minutes 45 seconds, setting a new record for the fastest time.

## What was the inspiration for circumnavigating Bermuda?

I had become fascinated with what your mind and body must go through to swim for very long periods of time. I needed to see for myself. After I completed the Catalina Channel my mind kept going back to a long swim. Catalina hurt, they all hurt. But I could not get my mind off of it. I signed up for the seven-stage, 120-mile 8 Bridges Hudson River swim to see how that would feel on my body. I told myself that if I was able to complete all seven stages, I would get serious about planning Bermuda. I completed the swim over seven days and it took me 34 hours, 15 minutes, 45 seconds. I learned a great deal that week about marathon swimming, myself, my nutrition and what I could handle mentally and physically.

Bermuda itself was also an inspiration. It is a really special place to me. When I went there for the first time I felt a connection, like I had been there before. I really believe

it is important to understand where you are swimming, the water in which you are swimming and to always respect the swim itself.

## What is the history of the swim?

The story goes that Sean O'Connell [the first person to swim around Bermuda] was talking in a bar with a friend. The man said something to the effect: "Well, no one could swim around Bermuda." Sean took up the challenge. The guy bet him \$1,000 (back in 1977 too!). So Sean set to work. He studied the tides, water, winds, etc, and set up his own training plan. He swam but was not a swimmer. The first attempt he made in July did not work. He went counterclockwise (the way I swam) but got stuck after he turned the corner of the north shore. His second and successful attempt was in August 1976. He went clockwise. And that is as far as the history goes.

## Do obscure swims appeal to you more than better known challenges?

I choose swims that have meaning for me. They have to speak to me in some way and I put everything into that swim. I do several small charity swims a year to support people and charities I believe in (5ks, 10ks) and then I usually choose one big swim a year.

I have some mainstream swims on my bucket list but there are also places where I would like to swim that have not been explored. Water makes up 71% of the earth's surface and 96.5% of all the earth's water is contained within the oceans, so, it seems to me, there is a lot of swimming that can be done.

## What were conditions like for your swim?

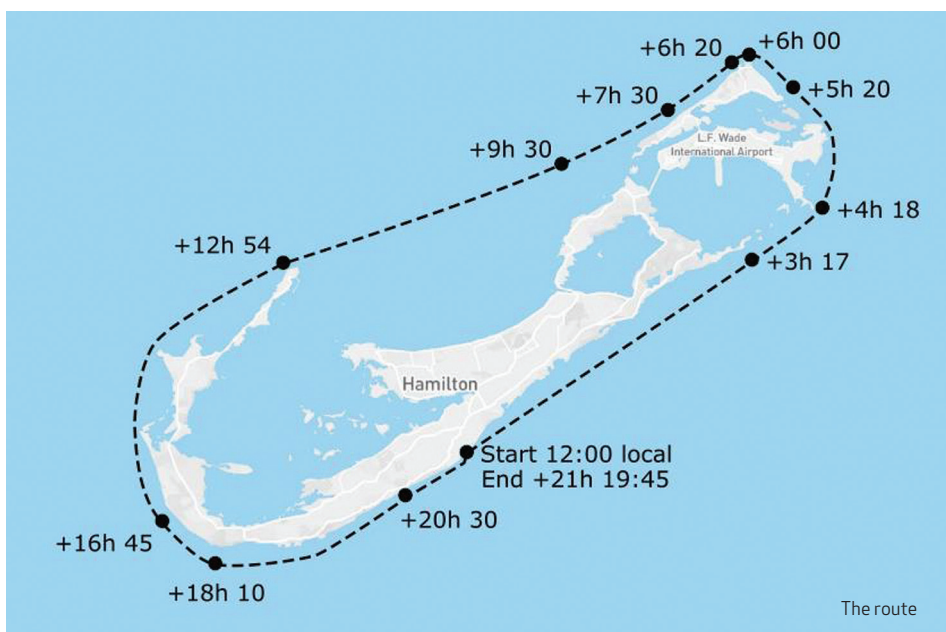
Naively, I did not understand why the team of locals was so worried about the wind. Bermuda sits unprotected and away from land for 600+ miles, so wind and what it does around Bermuda waters is very different than in other places. Conditions on my day were thus: SW winds of 12-14 mph the entirety of the swim, 2-3 foot swells throughout the north shore stretch into the west bottom (~17 miles).

Bermuda also has very tricky reef lines with crazy boilers which took my crew careful navigating to get me safely through. The ocean landscape around Bermuda changes in so many different places.

## What scared you most before the swim?

My first fear was that I was not even going to be able to start. The weather was not looking good before or after the start date of 16-17 June and I could not stay in Bermuda indefinitely to

IN THE END, MY FEARS  
WERE NOT ONLY  
JUSTIFIED, BUT TURNED  
OUT TO BE INSUFFICIENT,  
GIVEN THE MAGNITUDE  
OF THE TASK







wait for better conditions. The plan was for me to get there and we would see.

When I landed at 8:50 pm, I was told they had a window that looked pretty good but I would have to be ready by noon the next day. So they pushed the start date ahead 1 day and 2 hrs.

My second fear, and one I had worried about for months, was water temperature. When I did Catalina it was 62 degrees F (16.5 C) and I was 20lbs (9kg) heavier. Although I swam with CIBBOWS in the colder months I was afraid of the length of time I would be in the water. The temperature ended up being around 78-79 F (25.5-26 C).

Also, Bermuda's water has a high salt content and I knew it would affect my mouth. I had no idea how bad that would be. My tongue is swollen badly, my throat and inside of my mouth is raw. Eating, since the swim, has been painful.

In the end, my fears were not only justified, but turned out to be insufficient, given the magnitude of the task.

### What were you most looking forward to?

I was looking forward to seeing Bermuda from a perspective that most will never experience. I was also looking forward to the end! I had visualised coming out of the water many times.

### What was the high point of the swim?

The high point of the swim was seeing, even while swimming, just how engaged and efficient my crew was throughout. The team assembled had not all worked together previously, and to see, from the water, just how smoothly things were running was awesome.

### What wildlife did you see on the swim?

The water around Bermuda is beautiful and clear. I could see the bottom and magnificent coral during some portions. There was a stretch that got very, very deep but I could see the most beautiful shades of blue. I had fish of all sorts swimming under me. I did get jellyfish stings. Nothing bad, just uncomfortable; you just have to swim through those annoyances. One did get into my suit and was stinging so I had to pull it out.

About three or so miles from the finish, the small support boat sighted a Portuguese Man of War that I was in line to swim through. He quickly positioned the boat so I veered away and it was on the other side of me and the boat.

### What was the low point and how did you deal with that?

The low point in my swim was definitely when I thought I had not hit the north shore. It was early in the swim and I thought: there is no way I am going to be able to make it. However, it



Lori is congratulated at the finish

turned out I had passed it an hour ago! I knew the north shore was going to be a long boring stretch; however, the 12-14 mph head-on chop mixed with the 2-3 foot swells, combined with the fact that it was not letting up even when the sun went down, really was doing a number on me physically and mentally.

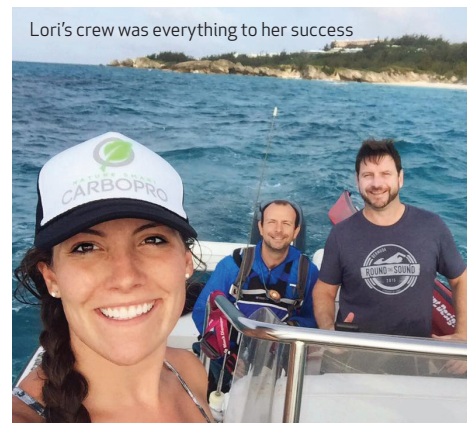
Physically, I dealt with it by telling myself that I have to keep moving my arms and the feed will come. If I slow down it will be the beginning of the end.

Mentally, I dealt with it by reminding myself that my crew was not giving up so I couldn't give up. They read me good luck messages that our marathon swimmer friends had sent me. I thought of what one of my support team's daughter told me before I went to the start: "I believe in you." I thought about how my other team member Roseli Johnson told me she would be waiting on the shore the next day for me to see me come out of the water. They all kept me going.

### What was your feeding strategy?

For me, feeds are a necessary evil. I use CarboPro. Two scoops of Hydra C5 along with one scoop of plain CarboPro were mixed in 20 oz. feed bottles. This regimen is what works for me but everyone's nutrition is different and it can be trial and error until one finds

Lori's crew was everything to her success



what works best for their needs. I take in about 4 ounces every 30 minutes. If I could get down more I would and my crew was really diligent about making sure I was taking enough.

### How important were your crew to your success?

The crew was everything to my success. I really believe a swimmer is only as good as his or her crew and the longer the swim the more that rings true. If they felt the slightest bit of doubt that I may not make it, they never let me feel it.