

# Narwhal News

September, 2013

This has been an absolutely incredible season for Mesa Aquatics Club Masters! Each and every day we are seeing swimmers stepping it up in workout, resulting in constant improvement. Our competitive swimmers have knocked it out of the ball park this season, and have even shocked themselves with some of their outstanding performances. Our Triathletes have had an amazingly successful summer, and have felt solid coming off the swimming leg of their races. And, the Open Water crowd have made monumental accomplishments locally, nationally, and internationally. Congratulations to each and every one of you!!! Let's keep pursuing our goals, and encouraging our teammates to do the same!!! Go M.A.C!!!

## THE TRIPLE CROWN OF OPEN WATER SWIMMING Featuring our very own Narwhal, KENT NICHOLAS!!!!

Membership into the revered Triple Crown requires the completion of three famous marathon swims: 21 miles across the English Channel between England and France, 20.2 miles across the Catalina Channel in Southern California, and 28.5 miles around the Manhattan Island in New York. Kent successfully tackled each of these swims and much, much more. Besides being a talented attorney, father of two, and adoring husband...Kent spends his free time as an Aquatic SuperHero. Although none of us can figure out WHY Kent thinks these kinds of swims are fun, we can all agree that he's really darn good at them. Being a shy and understated kind of guy, Kent was unwilling to shamelessly brag about his accomplishments, so I had to scrounge around and cut and paste a bit. However, the below is a good account of his little jaunt across the pond:



*"The weather could not have been better,"* recalls Kent Nicholas, a criminal attorney from Arizona and creator of the S.C.A.R. Swim Challenge.

So he made the most of the opportunity presented to him by Mother Nature on his last leg of the Triple Crown of Open Water Swimming on August 1st.

Nicholas completed his English Channel crossing in 11 hours 22 minutes under the escort of Stuart Gleeson aboard the Sea

Leopard to become the 70th individual in history to join the **Triple Crown**.  
Kent's English Channel Swim went without a hitch.

Kent trained hard for the swim but was a bit concerned when a 34 year old healthy woman died swimming two weeks before his scheduled date. She was one mile from France. People talked about it in pubs in hushed tones and shook their heads. It also went through Kent's head as he swam in that area - just a very sad episode and still no explanation.

*The below is a recount from Kent:*

I was feeling surprising good all throughout my swim. The weather could not have been better. All the foul weather gear I bought Candy (she could have been in the reality show "Most Dangerous Catch") was not necessary. She actually put on her shorts and rolled up her t-shirt sleeves because the sun was out. As if she were taking a cruise in Newport Harbor and the only thing that was missing was a cocktail in her hand. I "hired" a female swimmer from Ireland to assist on the boat in case the weather was so poor that Candy became too sick to feed me and also to have some female company during my swim. Anna-Marie was fantastic and actually drove us around the area during off days to see sites like the Canterbury Cathedral (I picked up a Thomas Beckett prayer handout for good luck). I could not have asked for better weather during my swim as the day prior and day after resembled my darkest days in Oregon.

A big mistake I made initially was forgetting my passport on the boat. You need it in case the border patrol checks when you enter French waters. We had already left the dock at sunrise but had to motor back - I left it back at the hotel. It's not a good way to begin because the start of a swim is specifically timed to the tides. Missing a tide window can ruin a swim so I was kicking myself. I asked the pilot what I should do and he said, with little to no expression on his face, "Swim faster." I followed his direction which is why my "swim track" is pretty straight in comparison to other swim tracks which typically look like an "S".

Just prior to entering the water off Shakespeare beach there was a family of three (two parents and their four year old son). They came over to shake my hand and wish me well - shaking the little guy's hand made me think of Luke and boosted my confidence and energy. Actually made me emotional at the start.

I saw lions mane jelly fish which are painful if stung but I was never stung. My feedings were all warm 8 oz. liquids on the 1/2 hour interval. I never felt sea sick or nauseous. The water was projected at 61F but I wasn't cold. Physically my shoulders were fine, the waves never washed into my mouth, and the sun stayed out the entire time. The water was cloudy/murky and I could not see my hand at the bottom of my stroke but I expected that - the channel is relatively shallow with big ships turning up muck. All the stories and books I've read about the hardship and pain and misery just didn't happen in my case. I was fortunate with the weather is my only answer.

There were several boats in my vicinity during the whole swim. I only focused on the Viking Princess (a trawler) because from my vantage point it was all I could see. I didn't know who was swimming with that boat but imagined it was one of the four Australian swimmers I met on the beach during prior training days in Dover Harbor. It seems so silly to be 46 years old and imaging yourself in an international open water race with some unknown competitor but that kept me moving along pretty good. I beat him to the finish and there was a British relay team that had finished just ahead of me. They all came up and shook my hand and I exchanged my Mesa swim cap that read "Nicholas" with a British swimmer whose cap read "Nick."

I was fine after the swim. Went to The White Horse pub to write my name and time on the ceiling. I had a pint of Guinness beer. Overall a very good experience. I really appreciate all the positive thoughts you had for me while I swam.

**CONGRATULATIONS, YOU CRAZY LAKE BOY, YOU!!!! WOW!!!!**



## OPEN WATER SUCCESS AROUND THE GLOBE

During the month of August, MAC had three narwhals finish some impressive open water swims outside the Arizona waters.

The Narwhal King of open water swimming, Kent Nicholas, set off on his journey to complete the grueling 21-mile swim across the English Channel. Facing frigid waters, of 61°, and rough currents, Kent felt strong and energized the entire way and even considered swimming the trip back to Dover, England. Not only did Kent Nicholas finish the English Channel swim in a blazing 11 hours 22 minutes and 22 seconds, but he also finished the third leg to earning the biggest accomplishment in open water swimming, The Triple Crown! WE ARE SO PROUD OF KENT!



Our mighty Joanne Menard made the trip to Lake Mirror in Lake Placid, NY to compete in the 2-mile cable national championships. Joanne placed first winning the national championship in her age group AND beating the national record holder! Unbelievable! Since coming back to AZ she has finally defrosted from the 66° water!

Finally, Shauna Nelson competed in the Horsetooth Open Water 10k for the 3<sup>rd</sup> time in Fort Collins, Colorado. This year she ended up 2<sup>nd</sup> place. She blames her beloved coach for dying in the last mile because he overtrained her and did not let her rest. With her new training regimen planned for next year, she plans to win the trophy back!



Kent Nicholas before the start of his English Channel crossing

## USMS LONG COURSE NATIONALS WITH MAC!

*By Greg Heden*



They teach us in physical therapy school that in order to keep making gains one has to set goals, develop a way to measure those goals, and keep challenging them. If it gets too easy, the bar has to be set higher. Joining MAC has been an outstanding experience and everything I wanted out of swimming at this point in my life through the interaction each morning with my teammates to the motivation from our stellar coaches. But it was time to set a goal and go after it. And USMS Long Course Nationals in Mission Viejo, CA was the perfect venue to do this.

It had been 17 years since I had competed in a big meet, so I didn't have any real expectations, other than to enjoy the experience and have fun. My goals were to lay the groundwork and see where I was at in this meet, be inspired by those around me, and just plain have fun.

Inspiration was everywhere. Not only were we in a historic pool in Mission Viejo, but we were surrounded by masters swimmers of all ages. I had trouble keeping up with some people 10 years my senior! A world record was set in the 200 free relay in the 360 age group (sum of all the ages), which means every single member of that relay was over 90 years old.

But what made this trip so memorable, was experiencing the event with my MAC teammates. They were the ones that provided the most inspiration. Kelly Harrigan defended her titles in the backstroke, and continued to impress in sprint freestyle events. Super Shauna Nelson dominated some of the toughest events on the schedule, showing how rare and



versatile she is. Brad Cahoon continued to drop time in his distance events and even threw in some butterfly events for fun. Joanne Menard racked up national titles in her age group event after event, shaving off second after second. Lindsey Urbatchka showed us how fast she really is and swam times she was swimming before shoulder surgeries. My fellow breastrokers Kyle Miller, Tony Poleo, Patrick Brundage, and

Doug Adamavich showed me how breaststroke should be swum. And Coach Paul gave us a look at his speed in the sprint free events and rocked the fly in the medley relay. To be surrounded by such success was a highlight of the trip.

I had fun competing, trying new restaurants, spending time on the beach, and being with my teammates. I didn't swim outstanding times, but now I know where to improve. In my last event, the 200 breaststroke, I was able to score points for MAC. Even though it wasn't a great time, it seemed a fitting way to say thank you...and farewell.

I would encourage everyone to push themselves, set goals and go after them, whether it's competing in a



meet or doing an open water swim. Step out of your comfort zone and go for it. MAC is the perfect catalyst for your success.

*A thousand thanks to the coaches and swimmers of MAC. I will miss you all!*

*(And we'll miss YOU, Greg! Best of luck with everything!!!)*

## UPCOMING MEETS AND EVENTS!!!

More information on the below events can be found on our website:

[www.mesamasters.com](http://www.mesamasters.com) Check them out!

### **September 15<sup>th</sup> Canyon Lake Open Water**



September 15<sup>th</sup> is the Canyon Lake Open Water Swim, 4<sup>th</sup> in this season's series. The 4000 M starts at 7:00 AM, the 2000 M at 8:30 AM and the 1000 begins at 9:30 AM.

### **Oct 11 ~ 13 Bermuda Round the Sound Swims**



October 11 – 13 is the Bermuda Round the Sound Swims!!!! Yeah, we wish this was a mandatory M.A.C. event. Trust me!!! However, for those of you with too much free time and disposable income, it sounds like a fantastic swim!!! Then again, isn't any swim Bermuda spectacular?!?!?

### **October 19 Lake Pleasant Open Water Swim**



Number 5 in the open water series will be held at Lake Pleasant. How could anyone NOT have a great swim in a lake named "Pleasant"?! We'll see you there!!!

### **Nov 3, 2013 - MAC Fall SCM Invite**

Mac will host a Short Course Meters Meet on November 3<sup>rd</sup> at Kino. Swimmers must enter by Oct. 28. You have GOT to enter this meet!!!

No, I mean seriously...you HAVE to! Come on!!! WE'RE hosting it!!! This is a great meet for first time competitors. Familiar venue, friendly teammates and a good time to be had by all! Can't wait to see your entries flood in!!!

**November 23-24 Arizona Fall State Meet/Ron Johnson Invite**



Besides the meet that we're hosting on November 3<sup>rd</sup> that you're all going to enter....this is the only other Short Course Meters meet offered in Arizona. The Ron Jon meet always produces some fast swimming!

**Go M.A.C!!!!!!**