Gulf of Maine Open Water Swimming Association

Role of the Observer

The role of the Observer is to independently witness a swim and document it in sufficient detail to allow GoMOWSA to review for ratification eligibility and ratify where appropriate. The Observer must complete the Observer Log clearly and accurately, as any omissions may prevent ratification. Observers are encouraged to engage with crew, follow the instructions of the pilot, and maintain focus on swimmer safety throughout the event.

The Observer's role is dedicated solely to observing and should not overlap with duties of the swimmer's crew.

Swim Start

At the start, the Observer must record the coordinates, air and water temperatures, date, and time. The official start is signaled by the swimmer entering the water, at which point the stopwatch and GPS tracking must begin. The swimmer must never touch the boat, crew, or any buoyant object for support.

The swimmer should start on dry land unless safety concerns or other restrictions prevent the swimmer from clearing the water. In such cases, the swimmer may touch land or an in-water starting point may be defined by the specific GPS coordinates of the start plus reference to a stable unchanging natural landmark. The pilot is the final authority on all safety- or restriction- related starting point decisions. These details should be recorded in the log.

During the Swim

Throughout the swim, the Observer Log must be updated at a minimum of every 30 minutes, although more frequent observations are encouraged. Each log entry should include the time, air, and water temperature, wind speed and direction, stroke rate per minute, details of feeds or medication administered to the swimmer and any support swimmer activity. Additionally, the observer is encouraged to report on incidents, the swimmer's physical and mental state, latitude and longitude, and sea life encounters. Any deviations from the stated rules and the reasoning for the deviation must be clearly described in the log or in an addendum if more space is needed.

Images must be taken for ratification: one at the start, one at the finish, and one per every hour of swimming. A one-minute video clip showing the swimmer's stroke rate should also be captured, with additional footage if necessary. If support swimmers are used, they may only swim for up to one hour, must not touch the main swimmer, and must not swim ahead in a way that provides drafting advantage to the swimmer. The support swimmer's participation must be recorded in the log.

For multi-way swims, the Observer must record the details of each waypoint including coordinates in combination with a permanent landmark, time, and time out of the water, if applicable.

Swim Finish

The Observer must record the finish coordinates, time, total distance swum, and final stopwatch time. Photographic evidence should also be taken at this stage.

The swimmer should finish on dry land unless safety concerns or other restrictions prevent the swimmer from clearing the water. In such cases, the swimmer may touch land or an in-water finish point may be defined by the specific GPS coordinates of the finish plus reference to a stable unchanging natural landmark. The pilot is the final authority on all safety or restriction related starting point decisions. These details should be recorded in the log.

Post-Swim Requirements

After the swim, the Observer must ensure all information in the log is accurate and signed off.