Marathon Swimming Rules

In order to be presented to GoMOWSA for ratification, a swimmer and their crew must abide by the following rules during their marathon swim:

Definition of Marathon Swim

A marathon swim is defined as a continuous swim covering a minimum distance of 10 kilometers. Swims shorter than 10 kilometers fall outside the scope of solo documented marathon swims.

Multi-way Swims

Swims with landings:

During a multiway swim that includes a landing, athletes are required to fully exit the water and may remain on land for a maximum of 10 minutes. During this time, no physical assistance from another person is permitted. However, swimmers may receive items such as grease, food, medical supplies, or swim apparel, provided they are handed to the swimmer without physical contact. The duration of the landing stop will be included in the swimmer's official overall time.

Swims with in-water turn-arounds:

For multi-way swims conducted with in-water turn-arounds, the one-way segment between points A and B may be less than 10 kilometers. However, the total cumulative distance of the swim, including the return segment, must equal or exceed 10 kilometers (e.g., swimming from point A to B and back to A without exiting the water landing).

Tandem Swims

A tandem swim consists of two solo swimmers of comparable pace completing the full distance together while sharing a single support vessel.

Both swimmers must remain within 20 feet distance of the designated support vessel at all times. Swimmers are required to maintain a parallel formation, without one swimmer leading the other. The use of pacers is not permitted.

Age Requirements

The minimum age for marathon and channel swims is set at 14 years. This aligns with international standards and reflects a consensus on physical and mental readiness for such challenging endeavors.

Equipment

The following gear is permitted, and must conform to the described standards:

- **Swimsuit:** All swimsuits must be made from textile materials, and must be in one or two pieces. Swimwear must not extend past the shoulder or below the knee. Tech suits are not permitted.
- **Cap**: One latex or silicone swim cap
- **Goggles**: Standard or prescription goggles
- **Additional Gear:**
    - Ear plugs
    - Nose clip
    - Sunscreen
    - Body grease
    - Swim buoy
    - Lights and or glow sticks may be attached to the swimmer/swimmer's equipment

The following gear is not permitted:

- Tech suits
- GPS or **"**Smart goggles"
- Neoprene of any kind
- Body tape
- Watches
- GPS wearable devices
- MP3 players or other electrical audio/communication devices

Swim Buoys

A standard swim buoy may be used strictly for visibility purposes. It must not be used for flotation, support, or physical assistance at any time, and swimmers are not permitted to hold onto the buoy during the swim.

Wildlife Deterrents

The use of non-performance-enhancing equipment that provides no clear advantage to swimming performance—such as shark shields or other deterrent devices—is permitted as long as it is not in violation of any other rule.

Any equipment used must be specifically noted in the swim documentation.

Watches

No watches or GPS wearable devices are permitted.

Goggles

Standard or prescription goggles are permitted.

No GPS or “smart goggles” are permitted.

Other Electronic Devices

The use of MP3 players or other electrical audio / communication devices are not permitted.

No GPS or “smart goggles” are permitted.

Adaptative Swims

GoMOWSA follows current WPS and IPC rules.

https://www.paralympic.org/swimming

Physical Contact

Swimmers must not make intentional contact with any vessel, object, or support personnel at any time during the swim. Additionally, swimmers may not touch any person or object that could assist or enhance their forward motion in any way. Any contact must be unintentional and must not provide physical support or propulsion.

Navigation and Drafting

Swimmers are strictly prohibited from drafting behind any moving escort vessel. At no time may a swimmer position themselves behind a moving vessel for the purpose of gaining a hydrodynamic advantage. Swimmers must remain alongside their escort vessel and are not permitted to swim ahead of or within the vessel's bow or displacement waves. At the point in the swim when it is not safe for the escort vessel to continue to shore, at the Captain's discretion, the swimmer may safely proceed to shore, ahead of the vessel.

Support Swimmers

Solo swimmers may be accompanied by a support swimmer only after completing the initial three-hour period of the swim. The support swimmer may join for a maximum duration of one hour. Following this period, the support swimmer is not permitted to re-enter the water until at least two hours have elapsed. The support swimmer must swim alongside the solo swimmer and is not allowed to lead or swim ahead. All details regarding the support swimmer must be documented and submitted as part of the official swim records.

Observers and Documentation

Observers must be independent, non-partisan individuals with demonstrated knowledge of marathon swimming procedures.

Any active observer must be dedicated to documentation of the swim, verify adherence to rules, and keep official time. Active observers will sign off each segment of the swim log at the end of their observation segment.

Tandem swims require at least one observer per swimmer.

Tracking Course Routes

Original raw GPS data in GPX format is required to verify the swim route. Acceptable sources include SPOT trackers, smartphones, or smartwatches. When using a smartwatch, the device must remain on the support vessel and be operated exclusively by the support team. In lieu of GPS data a manually mapped route of the course, including GPS coordinates every 30 minutes, will be permitted for documentation.

Repeatable Course Routes

The swim course must follow the shortest navigable path that conforms to the designated route. Any intermediate waypoints must be tied to a permanent, natural landmark to ensure consistency and repeatability.

In cases involving a landing, only routes defined by stable, unchanging natural landmarks will be considered valid for official recognition.

If landing is not possible (due to safety concerns or other restrictions - to be detailed in the swim log), an in-water start, turn around or end point may be established to define the course. In this case, the route should be defined by the specific GPS coordinates of the turn or end point plus reference to a stable unchanging natural landmark.

Photographic Documentation

Photographic evidence must be provided at a minimum rate of one photo per hour of swimming, including images at the start and finish of the swim. All photos must retain original EXIF data (metadata embedded by the camera or device) for verification.

Additionally, clear photographs of all swimmer equipment, whether on or off the swimmer, are required.

For multiway swims, photographic evidence of all turnaround points must also be submitted.

Visual documentation must be accompanied by written observations and an attestation signed by the official observer(s) and pilot.

GoMOWSA understands that conditions may not be ideal at any given time to take a clear, highly visible photograph. Please use best effort to take photos under conditions such as darkness, fog, or distance (start and finish). when submitting photos for ratification, please include all key photos regardless of quality.

Video Documentation

Minimum of 1 minute of video showing the swimmer’s stroke rate must be submitted. Additionally, where possible, video recordings of the swim’s start and finish should be provided.

Observation Log

A copy of the written observation of a swim presented for ratification must be submitted to GoMOWSA. It is not required to use GoMOWSA’s observation log, however, all information required in the log must be recorded in a clear and organized manner.

Information that must be recorded in the log includes: swimmer name and date of birth, swim route or name, swim location, description of swim, observer name, pilot name, vessel name,

names and roles of all crew members; swim start, finish and turn around information including coordinates, date, time, water and air temperature. Additionally the following data must be recorded at a minimum of 30 minute intervals: time, water and air temperature, weather (wind speed and direction), stroke rate and other observations as appropriate (feeds, swimmer condition, animals encountered, support swimmer, pilot decisions, etc.)

Please see the detailed observation requirements on GoMOWSA's downloadable log.

In addition, the swimmer must provide a narrative description of the swim. Please see the downloadable Swimmer Report document.