

# Leduc man becomes oldest Canadian to swim English Channel



EDMONTON JOURNAL

[More from Edmonton Journal](#)

Published on: August 26, 2015 | Last Updated: August 26, 2015 11:19 AM MST



Leduc swimmer Wayne Strach, 60, recently became the oldest Canadian to swim the English Channel. SHAUGHN BUTTS /EDMONTON JOURNAL

Wayne Strach, who became the oldest Canadian to swim the English Channel last week, is already looking ahead to his next challenge.

The 60-year-old endurance swimmer from Leduc wants to complete the triple crown of marathon swimming.

“Now the pressure’s on me to do some other iconic swims,” he said just days after successfully swimming the 34-kilometre-wide Channel in 17 hours and 15 minutes. “So there you go. Now I’ve told you before I told my wife, so now I’m in trouble.”

Having already conquered the choppy waters of the English Channel, Strach needs to swim the 32-km Catalina Channel just off the coast from Los Angeles and the 46-km Manhattan Island Marathon to achieve his next goal.

For now, he is basking in the glory of his recent swim.

“I’m going to be tagged that for the rest of my life,” he said. “If you can’t be the best at something and you can’t be the fastest at something, if you wait long enough, you can always be the oldest.”

Vincent Pogacher set the previous record when he swam the channel in 15 hours and 50 minutes as a 57-year-old in 1989.

“It took me slightly longer than I had planned for,” Strach said, “but you never know what the weather’s going to do and how adverse the tidal currents might be and what kind of routing you might have to take around ships.”

Strach, who had to avoid the steady stream of ships travelling up and down the Channel, began his swim on Aug. 21 at 2:20 a.m., diving into the dark, surprisingly warm water with nothing more than a glow stick to guide him and his crew.

He pushed his way through extremely choppy waters for the first three or four hours. The tidal currents proved to be his biggest challenge.

“I did manage to take in a little bit too much sea water at that point,” he said, “so I did get nauseous and got sick four or five times. But I got through that in the first few hours and I was fine after that.”

Strach, who’s been an endurance swimmer for most of his life, intensively trained for three years prior to his Channel swim. He swam in cold water and storms. He swam for 14 straight hours in pools.

He was confident and ready when he dove off the shore of Dover, England. The only thing that worried him was how he would handle the inevitable jellyfish stings.

“I think that was too hyped, to tell you the truth,” he said. “They weren’t as big of a problem as I was led to believe. I encountered some all right, but they weren’t much more than the odd bee sting.”

Strach continued to swim despite the annoyance of the stings and pain in his arms from swimming. Uncertainty briefly entered his mind, especially when he could see the shore hours before he put his feet back on solid ground.

He was greeted by a group of young students and posed for photographs when he finally reached the white sandy beaches near Calais, France.

“It was surreal,” he said. “I’m still stoked. This is days later and I’m still on that high.”

When asked if he would do it again, Strach paused for a moment.

“You know, I would,” he said. “I may have to go back in 15 years and claim that title (the oldest person to swim the Channel), if it hasn’t turned into eighty-something by then.”