

California Swimrun 12k Race Report

By: George Rehmet



The sport of Swimrun is multiple-stage competition which involves participants in teams of two running and swimming over a cross-country race course that involves many transitions between the swim and run stages of the race. Participants need to carry or wear what they need to swim and run. In short, you swim with your shoes on and run in a wetsuit if needed.

The sport originated as a drunken bet in a bar in the Swedish Archipelago off the coast of Stockholm in 2002. Today there are over 300 swimrun races worldwide, but only a handful in the USA. In 2015, Andy Hewitt and Sean Durkin created the first swimrun race in Mission Bay, San Diego.

In 2016, I had met Andy and Sean at our swim club in San Francisco. Andy and Sean were in San Francisco training in our cold waters for the ÖTILLÖ Swimrun World Championships in Sweden which could be compared to the Hawaiian Ironman Triathlon. I was intrigued and promised them that I would try this sport.

Fast forward to May 7, 2017. Thanks to Sean, I was matched up with local Kristen, a triathlete from San Diego. Kristen and I agreed that we would take the pace easy with the goal of just finishing. Just as we started, we decided to “throw it down” as our competitive juices got the best of us. The course circumnavigated Mission Bay with the 9 run legs around $\frac{1}{2}$ mile to 1.5 miles while the 8 swim legs are from 120 meters to 250 meters.



For the first few legs, our team was in the middle of the pack. During the longer legs, we started to pass other teams. During the swims, the passed teams pass us. Kristen and I emerged from the water and passed the other teams again. It's a back and forth game especially with another mixed team for that last podium spot.

There were a couple of times when I thought we were lost, but Kristen knew the course well as a local. Towards the end, I started to fatigue as last week's Big Sur Marathon was catching up to me. I didn't want to let Kristen down so I dug deep. With the last swim leg coming up, we ran as hard as we could as we knew that the other team was faster in the water. We swam furiously and managed to finish the last swim dead even with the other team. Kristen and I put our running legs to test and finished 7th overall and 3rd in the mixed division by 20 seconds.

I found swimrun exciting as I enjoyed competing with a partner where I felt safe while we pushed each other. I did get used to swimming in shoes but nevertheless I did use hand paddles to compensate from the drag of my shoes. Andy and Sean did a fabulous job and they hope to introduce swimrun up in Northern California.

To learn more the California SwimRun, visit www.californiaswimrun.com. The next race down in San Diego will be on October 15.

