



## Chopper Swim Challenge by Lee Greshon - 21<sup>st</sup> March 2017

I decided to challenge myself and take part in the Chopper Swim Challenge, a **20km ocean swim** from Matiatia Bay on Waiheke Island to Judges Bay in Auckland. The event is a charity event with the sole aim of raising money for the Westpac Rescue Helicopter Trust.

There were 40 swimmers taking part in the swim. Each swimmer was required to have a support kayak and I was lucky enough to have Warren from **Hilton Brown Swimming Albany** as mine. Warren has been my swim coach for the past four years at Hilton Brown Albany. He has also been coaching my wife for the same amount of time with both of our kids swimming at Hilton Brown for around five to six years.



To prepare for the swim, I started swimming on average five to seven times a week, covering roughly 15kms. With my weekly swim at Hilton Brown, Warren could focus on specific Open Water training with me while giving me the confidence to tackle the Chopper Challenge.

The weather conditions for the swim were not ideal to say the least! 25 knot winds were forecast with a 0.5 - 1m swell with passing squally showers. Turns out that we had wind gust over 40 knots!

During the safety briefing before the swim, we were informed of the conditions and how much harder they would make the swim.

We started off at 7.45am and for the first two hours or so, progress was good and I was averaging 3.5-3.8km/hr. As we got further out into the channel, conditions worsened and progress slowed - a lot. We were swimming

directly into the wind and the swell and my pace dropped to 2.8km/hr. At times the wind was that strong that Warren was unable to keep up with me as he was directly copping it head on!

When I was 14km into the swim, the call was made to remove all the swimmers who were not close enough to Bean Rock due to the conditions. If we were still in the channel there would be no way we would be able to carry on swimming against the wind, the swell and the tide. The support boats dropped us off near Kelly Tarltons and we carried on with the swim along the shore and into Judges Bay where we completed the swim.

Although I was unable to complete the whole swim, **I still swam around 17-18km**. At no point during the swim did I think that I wanted to quit. As hard as the conditions made the swim, I still thoroughly enjoyed it and I am planning on doing it again next year. It is all good preparation for me as I plan to swim the Cook Strait during the summer of 2018/19.



To put the conditions into perspective, one of the swimmers who was able to complete the whole swim took 6hrs 50mins. Last year, he completed the swim in 4hrs 47mins.

As a fundraising event, a total of \$46,743.20 has been raised so far, of which I raised a total of **\$3,140.00**. Donations can still be made via the Everyday Hero website until the 17<sup>th</sup> May. During the swim, the Westpac Rescue Helicopter flew over us as it had to do a call out to Waiheke Island. A decent reminder of why the swim was organised and what we were raising money for.



**Congratulations Lee – what an amazing effort!**  
**From everyone at Hilton Brown Swimming**

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