

Diana Nyad's team hit back at claims she cheated in swim from Cuba to Florida daring doubters to 'show us the proof'

- Diana Nyad completed the swim in 52 hours, 54 minutes and 18 seconds
- Skeptics think she may have gotten a boost of oxygen from her team or even gone on the boat during the 110-mile course
- Her navigator told MailOnline he will prove all the doubters who claimed she cheated wrong with accurate data to be released within the next few days

By M.L. NESTLE

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The team of swimmer Diana Nyad today angrily hit back at claims she rigged her 110-mile record-breaking Cuba to Florida race.

John Bartlett, the navigator who was with her the whole way during her epic feat told MailOnline he dares any skeptics to challenge the data he will soon release publicly.

'Before anyone gets involved in discrediting the event or the information come talk to me,' he said. 'Let's see if you really know what you're talking about.'



Never give up: Diana Nyad emerges from the Atlantic Ocean after completing a 110-mile swim from Cuba to Key West, Florida



Challenge: John Bartlett, right, Nyad's navigator said doubters of her feat are using wrong information and will prove them wrong

The 66-year-old retired boat builder said he was furious about the mounting backlash over Nyad's swim from Havana to Key West by other marathon swimmers who are trying to sink her historic swim dubbed 'Diana's Extreme Dream'.

Andrew Malinak, a Seattle long-distance swimmer who crunched data available from the GPS positions tracked on Nyad's website said at the weekend that he didn't trust the disproportionate speeds and long lapses.

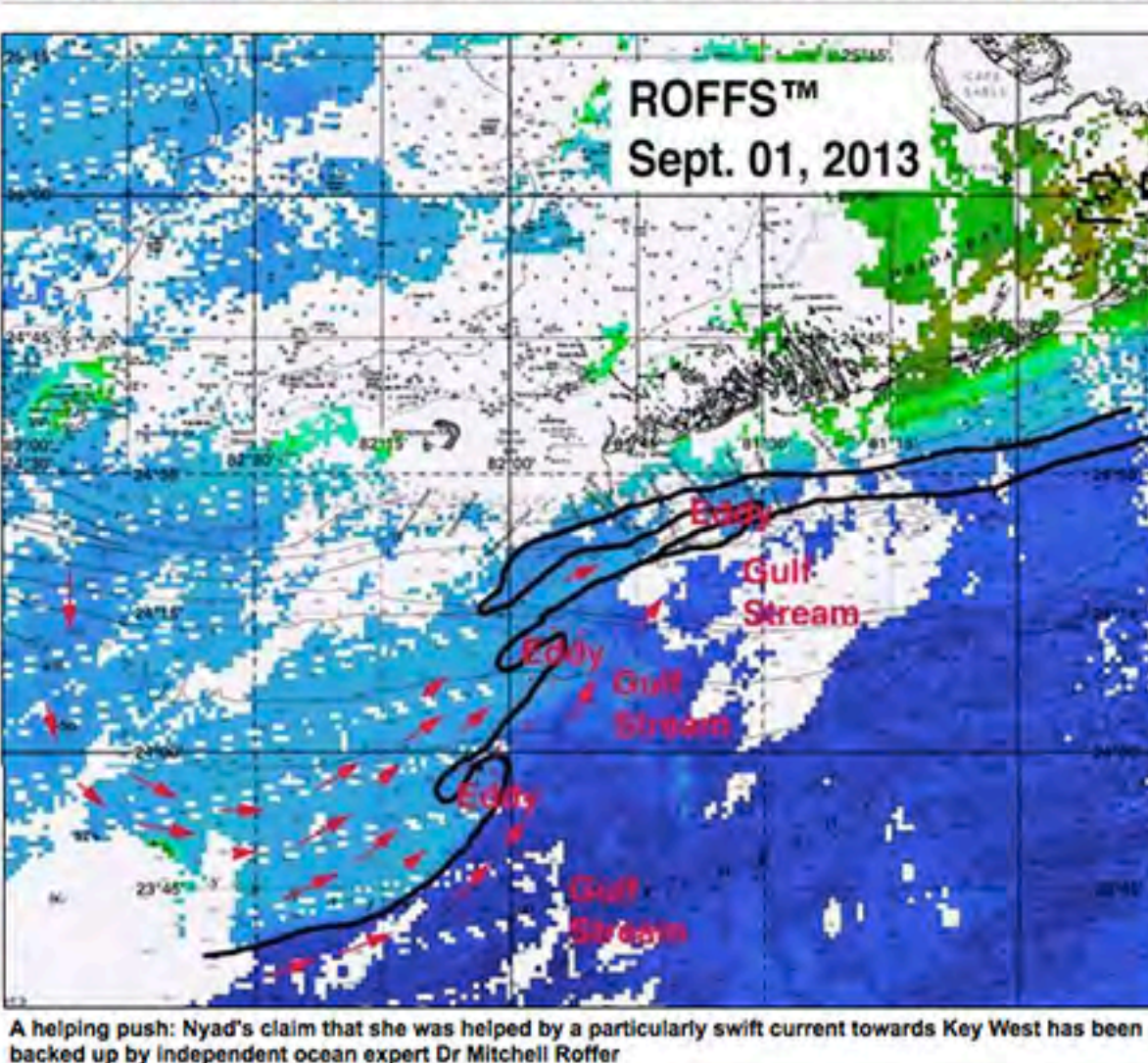
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'When you know how hard it is, you kind of want those details,' he had said.

Malinak said a seven-hour-long spike in Nyad's speed after 27 hours of swimming is particularly questionable - she went from her normal pace of roughly 1.5 mph to more than 3 mph, then slowed down again as she approached Key West.

Doubters said Nyad apparently didn't stop to eat or drink during that time and pointed put a 2012 attempt when she got onto the boat for hours during rough weather.



A helping push: Nyad's claim that she was helped by a particularly swift current towards Key West has been backed up by independent ocean expert Dr Mitchell Roffer

Nyad eventually got back into the water to try finishing, but her team was criticized for delaying the release of that information to the public.

Bartlett today said Nyad was aided during the rapid part of her swim by a swift current.

'Having a good current and being able to utilize that to get those speeds is just working to use the currents to our advantage.'

And Bartlett said Nyad's speed and location can't be measured by 'spot trackers' - that were quoted by the doubters - were simply estimating Nyad's location for public viewing and nothing more.

'Those spot trackers are for the public to watch Diana swim along. The positions that I have on my GPS are the real positions.'

The data collected by Bartlett and two observers will be submitted to three open-water swimming associations and the Guinness World Records for verification, he said.



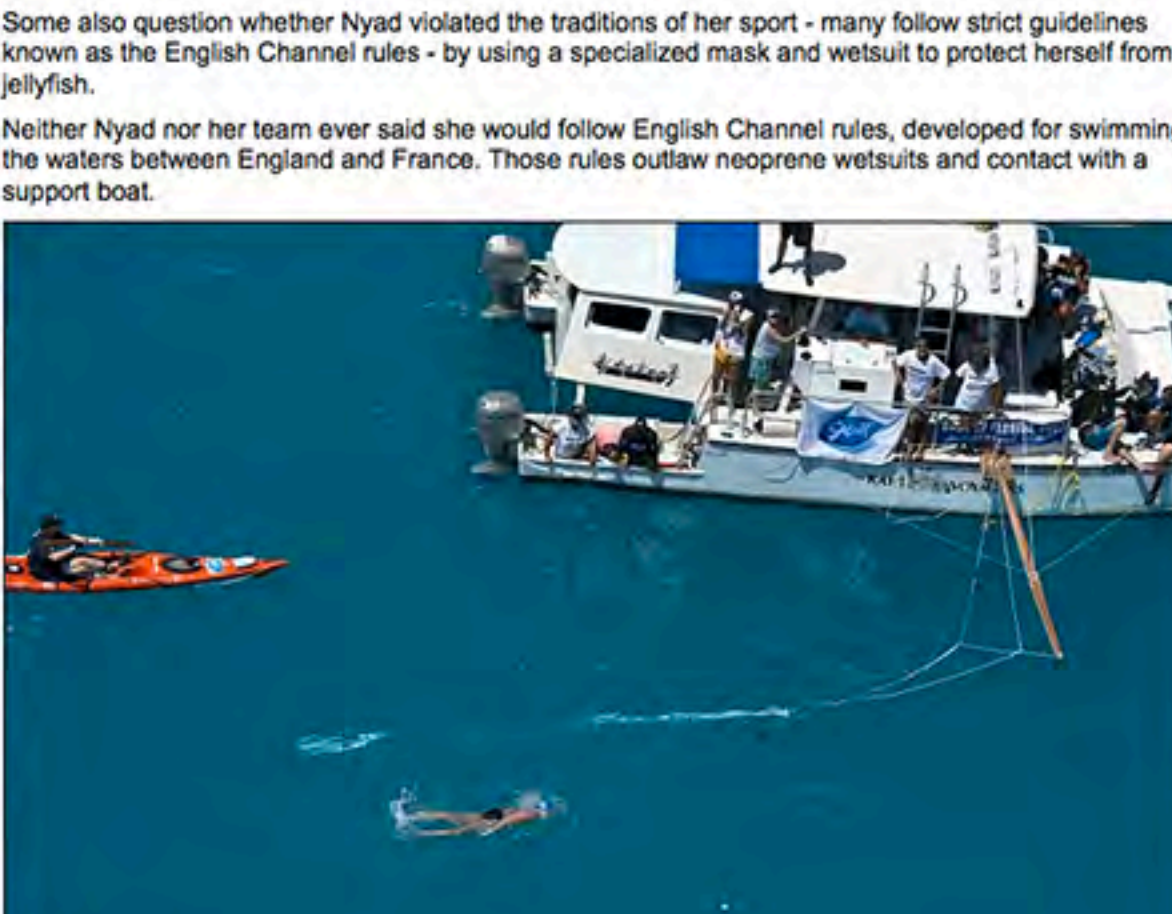
Secret weapon: This is Nyad's first attempt using the prosthetic face mask custom-made to shield her from the paralyzing stings of the box jellyfish, which some fellow swimmers consider to be cheating

Bartlett, who says he's been on the boat as a navigator and roles when Nyad races, affirms that the athlete never touched the boat and kept everything above board.

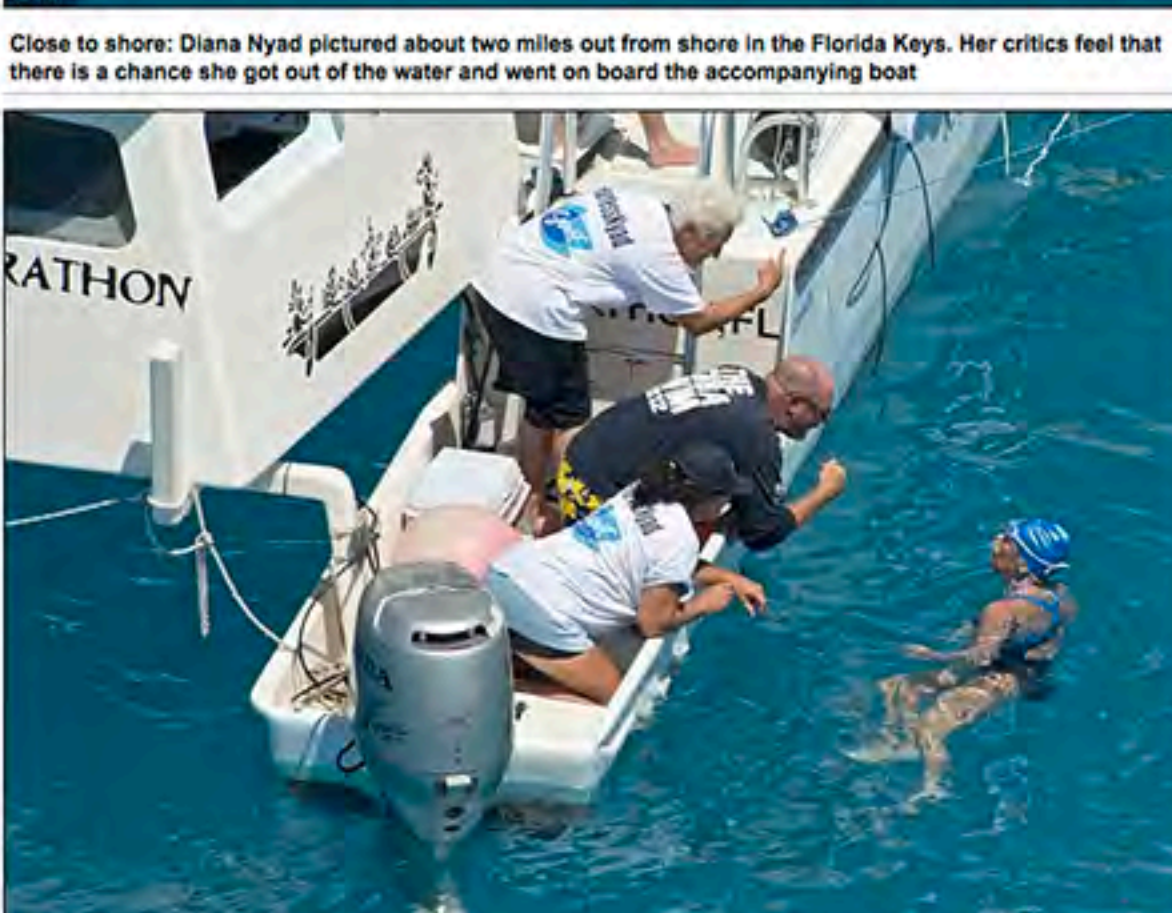
'She wasn't on the boat and nobody held her up or supported her. When she came to the side of the boat to eat she would tread water and people would feed her to her mouth. Nobody held onto her at all.'

Some also question whether Nyad violated the traditions of her sport - many follow strict guidelines known as the English Channel rules - by using a specialized mask and wetsuit to protect herself from jellyfish.

Neither Nyad nor her team said she would follow English Channel rules, developed for swimming the waters between England and France. Those rules outlaw neoprene wetsuits and contact with a support boat.



Close to shore: Diana Nyad pictured about two miles out from shore in the Florida Keys. Her critics feel that there is a chance she got out of the water and went on board the accompanying boat



More than just encouraging words? Some other swimmers say that an uptick in her speed mid race implies that she may have gotten a boost of oxygen from her team

Nyad wore a full non-neoprene bodysuit, gloves, booties and a silicone neck at night, when jellyfish are a particular problem, and removed the suit once she got over the reef on her approach to Key West.

According to Nyad's team, she finished the swim Monday afternoon after roughly 53 hours in the water, becoming the first to do so without a shark cage.

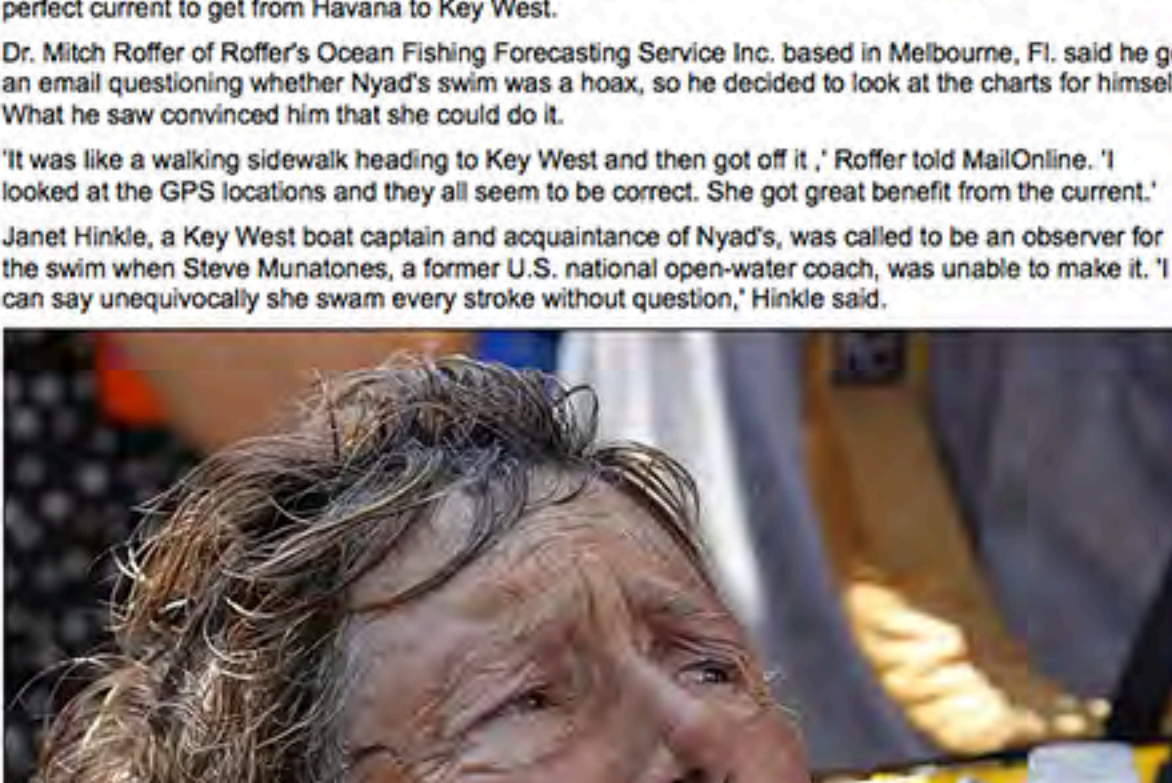
It was her fifth try, an endeavor apparently free from the boat troubles, bad weather, illnesses and jellyfish encounters that have bedeviled Nyad and other swimmers in recent years.

An oceanographer not affiliated with Nyad's team said the swimmer couldn't have picked a more perfect current to get from Havana to Key West.

Dr. Mitch Roffer of Roffer's Ocean Forecasting Service Inc. based in Melbourne, Fl. said he got an email questioning whether Nyad's swim was a hoax, so he decided to look at the charts for himself. What he saw convinced him that she could do it.

'It was like a walking sidewalk heading to Key West and then got off it,' Roffer told MailOnline. 'I looked at the GPS locations and they all seem to be correct. She got great benefit from the current.'

Janet Hinkle, a Key West boat captain and acquaintance of Nyad, was called to be an observer for the swim when Steve Munatones, a former U.S. national open-water coach, was unable to make it. 'I can say unequivocally she swam every stroke without question,' Hinkle said.



Exhausted: The grandmother appeared to be covered in salt after the length of time she spent in the water



Grandma completes 103-mile swim without shark cage



Critics have said Hinkle was too close to Nyad to be an independent observer of her swim. Hinkle has in the past helped Nyad by providing housing for her when the swimmer stayed in the Florida Keys, but she said she remained on the periphery of Nyad's team.

'I think anyone who knows me knows me as a person of high integrity. I believe that's why Diana asked me, and I took my job very seriously,' Hinkle said. 'She was giving her all and I would give her my best.'

Since none of the various open-water swimming associations dictate how someone should swim from Cuba to Florida - officially accomplished only by Nyad and Susie Maroney, who used a shark cage - Nyad just had to follow generally accepted rules about not getting out of the water or using equipment such as fins.

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