



# SAN DIEGO<sup>®</sup> MAGAZINE

## Q&A With Blair Cannon on his Upcoming Swim Across the Catalina Channel

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**What's your training schedule been like these past six months?**

About six months ago we finalized the plans to do the swim and to do it for the benefit of the kids. I had to start off with a little bit more of a conservative approach, so my mileage on a weekly basis, which is how I look at it, started off at about 15 miles a week, spread out across five or six days a week. Most of that was in the pool back in the March timeframe. Over the last six months, I've increased the mileage up to about 35 miles a week; I do all my training down at La Jolla Cove.

**While you're training, are there any foods you've cut out of your diet?**

The unique thing about this swim is that it's important to keep some body weight on, because I need some insulation to keep myself warm across the channel; I won't be wearing a wetsuit. To swim efficiently enough, but also to generate some heat, such that I don't suffer from hypothermia. Usually the training would compel me to lose weight, but in this case, I've had to keep an eye on maintaining my weight, so I haven't had to be too selective about the diet.

**What was that made you decide to go without a wetsuit?**

In the open-water, marathon-swimming community, if you want to have your channel crossing recognized by the [Catalina Channel Swimming Federation](#), you can't have anything that would aid in buoyancy or in insulation.

**What precautions are you taking, just in case all doesn't go according to plan?**

I'll have a boat out there with a crew of ten people that will help me with direction, because most of the swim will be in the pitch-dark. I won't be able to see land until I'm probably a few miles out. They'll feed me at regular intervals, and keep an eye on me such that if they think my health is going in the wrong direction, they'll decide whether I should continue.

**Your trainer originally recommended preparing for 18 months for the swim—what made you decide to go ahead with the swim so soon?**

Part of that is my personality—I get an idea in my mind, and I'd like to go after it as soon as possible... [Given] my background in swimming and in high-endurance sports, we ultimately came to the conclusion that it was probably a viable goal.

**You competed in high school and college, but since then are there other major events that you've competed in?**

After swimming in Division-I through college, I took a little bit of a break, but I realized that there was an important aspect of my life that was missing, and it was being a competitive athlete. I got back into triathlons, and ended up working my way up to some Iron Man distance triathlons. I had the privilege of competing in the Iron Man World Championships back in 2003 and 2004; in 2003, I had the fastest amateur swim split of the day. I've since built on that, and challenged myself in a variety of different ways, [and] this is an extension of that.

**What's your involvement been like with the Great Friends Foundation and the Monarch School?**

I've sat on the board for the Great Friends Foundation for a few years now... We did a clothing drive back in December of last year, and filled up an 18-wheeler full clothes to make sure that the homeless here in San Diego weren't going to go cold during the winter. It was a huge success, but in speaking with [fellow board members] Scott and Billy-Ray, we're thinking, 'how can we make a bigger impact?' We aligned ourselves with the Monarch School. I came up with the idea of the swim, to raise money and awareness for something we believe in.

This has been a pretty compressed timeframe, and it's been unique in that there's just one participant. That said, we've already raised over \$75,000. I'm proud of that, but that still falls short of our goal... This isn't so much about the swim as it is about the kids.

As a competitive athlete, I've always been trying to find new ways to challenge myself, and this swimming 21 miles will have been the greatest physical and psychological challenge I will have done to date. Being a member of the Great Friends Foundation, I've had the opportunity to turn this into a fundraiser.

To contribute to Cannon's fundraising campaign for the Monarch School and the Great Friends Foundation, visit [monarchschoools.org](http://monarchschoools.org).