

Shadow Seals Escape to Lake Washington!

On Saturday September 8th the first ever Shadow Seals open water event was staged at Madison Park Beach in Seattle. The Shadow Seals are a local swim team for athletes with physical disabilities coached by Kiko VanZandt, Justin Fleming and Guillermo Romano.

This event grew out of Shadow Seal swimmer Chris Junk's goal and dream to swim across Lake Washington. Scott Lautman (Blue Wave Masters) and Chris Lautman (Lake Washington Masters) organized this event with the help from the local masters swimming community (Lake Washington Masters, Blue Wave Aquatics, Greenlake Aqua Ducks and NEO).

The goal was to introduce the Shadow Seals swimmers to open water swimming and have them come away with a safe and positive open water experience. The event was a roaring success! We had 7 swimmers complete the open water event. The conditions were near perfect with unusually warm air temperatures of 64F when the event kicked off at 9:00am. The water was a pleasant 71F and calm with the exception of the occasional boat waves.

The morning started with a safety briefing and "chalk talk" for swimmers, kayakers and companion swimmers that included pointing out the potential water hazards, acclimatization to cold water, rescue information and some instructions on sighting. Each swimmer was required to wear a brightly colored cap of their choice and was paired up with an experienced open water swimmer for the session.

Based on their comfort level each athlete swam in the main swim area or swam around the apartments towards Seattle Tennis club. When finished each swimmer selected a rock from the beach to commemorate their first open water experience. Nearly all the swimmers were reluctant to get out of the water, another sign of a successful event and a great experience.

Finally, a walk and a roll up to the Madison Park Bakery to celebrate the mornings accomplishments and sitting in the sunshine devouring baked goods was the perfect end to a fun morning! The Shadow Seals learned that stopping by the local bakery after a good swim is another ritual that all open water swimmers recognize and embrace!

Thanks to all the volunteers and Shadow Seal coaches who together, made this a safe and fun open water swimming experience.

Shadow Seals now rock in the open water!

Shadow Seals swimmers: Chris Junk, Olivia Lautman, Henri Coronado-Volta, Katy Shimabukuro, Kayla Wheeler, John Klos and Joshua Anderson.

Companion swimmers: Tim Rood , Sue Bailey (Lake Washington Masters), Mary Lippold (NEO Masters), Dawn Jaeger (Lake Washington Masters), Dan Robinson Greenlake Aqua Ducks, Julie Voss (Lake Washington Masters), Michael Scott (Lake Washington Masters) and Claire Lautman (Wave Aquatics).

Kayakers: Kirby Lautman, Klaus Voss, Cory Cote

Shadow Seals Coaches: Kiko VanZandt, Justin Fleming, Guillermo Romano