

SWIM HOBBS ISLAND PRE-RACE INSTRUCTIONS FOR SWIMMERS AND KAYAKERS

Presented by [Team Rocket Triathlon Club](#)

Sunday, Sep 15, 2019 at Ditto Landing in Huntsville, AL
1, 2, and 5-Mile Open Water Swims

Swim Hobbs Island Participants and Kayakers,

On behalf of Team Rocket Triathlon Club and our generous host Ditto Landing, we'd like to personally thank you for racing participating in the 5th Annual Swim Hobbs Island. This is a truly unique event in Alabama. In fact, it is the only open water swim event in our state. As always, our #1 priority is to ensure your safety. We know that you understand that this is not like running a 5k, where you can sit down if tired, show up 10 minutes before the race start, etc. The logistics of executing a safe open water swim requires the utmost compliance from both swimmers and pilots. **Please DO NOT BLOW OFF READING THIS** - rather, carefully review the following instructions so that we can have a safe and joyfully uneventful race.

Ali Meeks, Race Director, and her team of amazing volunteers and angels,

swimhobbsisland@gmail.com

206.779.9425 (yes two zero six area code)

Directions to Race Site

From Huntsville, Hwy 231 southbound (Memorial Parkway): Turn left onto Hobbs Island Rd SE, drive southeast 0.9 miles, and then turn right onto Ditto Landing Rd SE at the Ditto Landing sign. After this, turn right onto Eugene Morgan Rd and continue until the first stop sign. Turn left there onto Younger Rd. Continue until it intersects back with Ditto Landing Road and you see a large building on your right. Turn right and continue past the very large building and bear right alongside the side of the building and follow the road down the slight hill toward the boat dock parking. From there you will be greeted by volunteers who will help you offload kayaks and park your vehicles. Check in is at the far southwest end of that parking lot. Please note: Ditto Landing is our extremely generous host and we ask that you ONLY park in the areas that our parking attendants direct you. **Address for GPS Purposes: 293 Ditto Landing Rd SE, Huntsville, AL 35803**

Race Details:

Schedule of Events:

Race Day: Sunday, Sep 15, 2019

6:30 AM – 7:30 AM: Check-in at far southwest end of Ditto boat dock parking lot.

6:45 - All kayakers and kayak lenders please arrive by this time

7:45 AM: Mandatory swimmer & kayaker Safety Meeting: 1 & 2 & 5 mile swim. Swimmers meet at swim entry point, kayakers meet at boat launch.

8:00 AM: All kayakers begin entering the water, 5 milers first.

8:15 AM: 5 Mile swim lineup and water check-In, National Anthem

8:20 AM: 5 Mile swimmers enter water.

8:30 AM: 5 Mile swim begins; 2 mile swim lineup and final check-in begins

NLT 8:45 AM: 2 Mile Race Begins no later than (NLT) this time; 1 mile swim lineup and final check-in begins

NLT 9:00 AM: 1 Mile Race Begins no later than this time.

9:30 AM – 2:30 PM: Swimmers, kayakers, spectators, volunteers enjoy complimentary food/drink

10:30 AM: 1 & 2 Mile Swim Awards (10:30 or as soon thereafter as results are finalized)

11:00 AM: 5 Mile Swim Awards (11 am or as soon thereafter as results are finalized)

NOTE: 5 Mile Swimmers MUST Complete the Swim in Under 5 hours (1:30pm) and MUST be at the south tip of the island (the turnaround point) at 3.5 hours, or 12:00pm. Race Director reserves the right to have Rescue Squad pull you after that time.

DRONE SAFETY NOTE: Personal video drones are allowed but MUST check in with Rescue Squad on race day, to let him know what you are flying and where you will be. They use their own drones for swimmer safety and we cannot have a mid-air incident. If you are perceived to be in their way they have our permission to give you the smackdown to ask you to land your craft. Swimmer safety is our TOP PRIORITY!

5 MILE RACE COURSE INSTRUCTIONS

- NO SWIMMING IN THE HARBOR AT ANY TIME! NO WARMING UP IN THE RIVER!
- All 5 mile swimmers are required to have a personal kayak escort registered prior to race day.
- NO Ipods or music players, because these impede hearing kayakers or safety staff.
- There may be wood debris logs/etc nearest the shore - we know you want to stay near the shore to be fast going upstream but better to be safe than sorry! Stay a safe distance from shore and keep an eye out.
- Park in the boat launch parking lot at Ditto Landing, and check-in at the check in table in at the southwest end of the boat launch parking lot. Then, make your way to the swim start, which is down the walking path along the Tennessee River Greenway at Ditto Landing.
- All 5-mile swimmers & kayakers MUST check-in PRIOR TO 7:30 am in order to swim. Your kayaker must be checked in at the check-in table for you to check in; this means you can check in at the same time, or they may check in before you. You will NOT be allowed to check in if your kayaker is not present or has not previously checked in.
- Kayakers MUST HAVE AND WEAR LIFEJACKETS AT ALL TIMES.
- Kayakers will remain at the boat launch where they will have a safety briefing at 7:45 am and then begin loading into the water. After the briefing, kayakers will exit Ditto Landing harbor and paddle to the swim start, which is around to the left about 0.25 miles after

exiting the harbor. All boat traffic has been stopped between 7:45 and 8:45 am so that kayakers will have safe passage.

- At the proper time (see schedule of events above), swimmers will enter the water via ramps positioned on the greenway path. The ramps are metal structures approximately 3 feet wide that have carpet on the floor of the ramp. There are no hand-height handrails on these, but there are side grips that you can hold as you descend the ramp either forward or backwards in a crouching position. There are places, upon entering the water, that are shallow enough to stand, so you will not need to tread water. Once entering the water, you will remain standing there until the rest of your 5-mile swim group is in the water, and then you will be started.
- All 5 mile swimmers should be prepared to swim in excess of 3 hours. Although this is "just" a 5 mile swim, the variable river current and distance from the swim start to the northernmost end of Hobbs Island will increase the difficulty and likely increase the distance to 5.25 or so miles. There will be all you can eat ice cream at the finish to help replenish you from this extra effort.
- **SWIM INSTRUCTIONS:** 5 mile swimmers will travel clockwise around Hobbs Island. You will swim upstream on the mainland side of the river, keeping buoys on your left, then you will **CROSS THE CHANNEL** from the mainland side of the river to the Hobbs Island side of the river, guided by the orange and yellow buoys, and continue swimming upstream until you reach the tip of the island (The turnaround buoys for the 1 mile and 2 mile races are yellow and all other buoys are orange, whereas for you, all buoys will seem alike since you will keep swimming past them all). The reason that we cross over is that there is a water intake on the mainland side of the river upstream of the crossover that we want you to avoid. After the first mile of the swim, the buoys will end and you will continue swimming clockwise around the island around the south tip of the island. At this point you will navigate the remainder of the course back to Ditto Landing by following the Hobbs Island shoreline and then crossing over back to shore eventually toward the big yellow buoy at the finish boat. In the downstream portion of the race when you are on the far (river) side of Hobbs Island, it is imperative that you stay to the right, out of the navigational channel and somewhat close to the island. We may have motor boats/jet skis in the water and, as much as you may want to catch that lovely fast flow, it is extremely dangerous if you are in the middle of the river.
- **FINISHING INSTRUCTIONS:** At the finish line, touch the **FINISH BUOY** near the stern of the timing pontoon boat. Your time will continue until you touch. Once you have touched the buoy, **YOU MUST** stay in the order you finished until you are given instructions by the timers aboard the timing pontoon platform. **PLEASE** help us stay sane and stay in order that you finished until someone on the timing boat excuses you so that we can have correct timing. Once you are excused, you are to move away from the timing boat and exit the water by going up the ramps. **THEN**, you must check in **IMMEDIATELY** at the t-shirt tent upon completion of the race so that we know you are done and safe.
- No wetsuits, no floaties, no wetsuits or swimskins. One-and two-piece tri-suits are ok for both men and women.
- Swimmers may be pulled from the water by our Rescue Squad at 5 hours (1:30pm) or if they have not reached the tip of the island (the turnaround point) by 3.5 hours, or 12:00pm.

- FYI, New Wave Swim Buoys and Swim-Its are welcome in this race and you will still be eligible for awards (Google these if you are unfamiliar with these items). LET US KNOW if you have something different from these - we do not want anyone using anything homemade or crazy. You can use snorkel, paddles, or fins, but will not be eligible for awards.
- DO NOT SWIM TO EXHAUSTION. Flip onto back and float. Your kayaker will see you floating on back and paddle over to see how they can assist you.
- IMPORTANT: You might perceive that kayakers seem assertive/aggressive with you to stay on course. They have been told to create a sort of barrier to keep you on course. If you have been a safety kayaker before, you know that is extremely difficult to get a swimmer's attention in the water, so please, understand they are not mean people altogether. They may have to shout to be heard or touch you lightly with their paddle. This is for your safety, so please, no arguing, and obey their instructions. Our kayakers can see better than you can from their vantage point and they are there for one reason and one reason only: your safety. If you are found willfully ignoring or arguing repeatedly with kayaker guidance, you may be disqualified at race director's discretion.
- 5-mile map: <https://ridewithgps.com/routes/25031125>

1 AND 2 MILE COURSE INSTRUCTIONS

- NO SWIMMING IN THE HARBOR AT ANY TIME! NO WARMING UP IN THE RIVER!
- NO Ipods or music players, because these would impede hearing kayakers or safety staff.
- There may be wood debris logs/etc nearest the shore - we know you want to stay near the shore to be fast going upstream but better to be safe than sorry! Stay a safe distance from shore and keep an eye out.
- Park in the parking lot at Ditto Landing, check in at the check-in table at the southwest end of the boat launch parking lot, and then make your way to the swim start, which is down the walking path along the Tennessee River Greenway at Ditto Landing.
- All swimmers MUST check in by AT LEAST 7:30 am to participate in this event.
- At the proper time (see schedule of events above), swimmers will enter the water via ramps positioned on the greenway path. The ramps are metal structures approximately 3 feet wide that have carpet on the floor of the ramp. There are no hand-height handrails on these, but there are side grips that you can hold as you descend the ramp either forward or backwards in a crouching position. There are places, upon entering the water, that are shallow enough to stand, so you will not need to tread water. Once entering the water, you will remain standing there until the rest of your 1- or 2-mile swim group is in the water, and then you will be started.
- Swimmers are registered as either wetsuit or non-wetsuit division. In the wetsuit division, wetsuits may be used up to water temperatures of 83.9 degrees. IF YOU ARE IN THE WETSUIT CATEGORY, you may wear a wetsuit, neoprene shorts such as the Roka ones, or a "speedsuit" or "swimskin" that does or does not contain floatation (neoprene). If you are in the NON-wetsuit category, that means no swimskins/speedsuits, and NO suits that provide any buoyancy. No wetsuits or swimskins in the 5-miler category. The reason we have this setup is that we intend the non-wetsuit category to be

regular people swimming in regular suits that do not have a speed advantage. The wetsuit category is intended for wetsuits or swimskin suits that do have a speed advantage.

- **SWIM INSTRUCTIONS:** 1 and 2-milers, you will swim upstream on the mainland side of the river, keeping buoys on your left, then you will **CROSS THE CHANNEL** from the mainland side of the river to the Hobbs Island side of the river, guided by the orange buoys, and continue swimming upstream to the first **YELLOW** buoy if you are a 1-miler, or the second **YELLOW** buoy if you are a 2-miler. (The turnaround buoys are yellow and all other buoys are orange). The reason that we cross over is that there is a water intake on the mainland side of the river upstream of the crossover that we want you to avoid. When you reach your respective big yellow turn buoy, you will turn around and then swim downstream, keeping all the buoys again on your **LEFT** during the entire swim until you reach the finish pontoon boat. There will be a big yellow buoy tied next to the finish boat which you will tag to finish.
- **FINISHING INSTRUCTIONS:** At the finish line, touch the **FINISH BUOY** near the stern of the timing pontoon boat. Your time will continue until you touch. Once you have touched the buoy, please stay in the order you finished until you are given instructions by the timers aboard the timing pontoon platform. **PLEASE** help us stay sane and stay in order that you finished until someone on the timing boat excuses you so that we can have correct timing. Once you are excused, you are to move away from the timing boat and exit the water by going up the slides. You must check in **IMMEDIATELY** at the t-shirt tent upon completion of the race so that we know you are done and safe.
- Swimmers, for your safety, try to stay as close to the buoys as possible; stay aware of where you are and do not get far out into the channel or too far away from the buoys.
- If you begin experiencing distress, you need to shout down, wave at, or otherwise or notify a kayaker at the earliest possible sign. For purposes of awards and speed, holding onto a kayak is perfectly acceptable as long as they're not towing you. If you are in distress, you may hold onto the kayak *and be towed*, but you will not be eligible for awards.
- **DO NOT SWIM TO EXHAUSTION.** Flip onto back and float. A kayaker will see you floating on back and paddle over to see how they can assist you.
- **FYI,** New Wave Swim Buoys and Swim-Its are welcome in this race and you will still be eligible for awards (Google these if you are unfamiliar with these items). **LET US KNOW** if you have something different from these - we do not want anyone using anything homemade or crazy. You can use snorkel, paddles, or fins, but will not be eligible for awards.
- **IMPORTANT:** You might perceive that kayakers seem assertive/aggressive with you to stay on course. They have been told to create a sort of barrier to keep you on course. If you have been a safety kayaker before, you know that is extremely difficult to get a swimmer's attention in the water, so please, understand they are not mean people altogether. They may have to shout to be heard or touch you lightly with their paddle. This is for your safety, so please, no arguing, and obey their instructions. Our kayakers can see better than you can from their vantage point and they are there for one reason and one reason only: your safety. If you are found willfully ignoring or arguing repeatedly with kayaker guidance, you may be disqualified at race director's discretion.
- 1-Mile map: <https://ridewithgps.com/routes/16450660>
- 2-Mile map: <https://ridewithgps.com/routes/16450703>

KAYAKER INSTRUCTIONS

We will have approximately 20ish kayakers for the 1 and 2 mile swim. Kayakers **MUST HAVE AND WEAR LIFEJACKETS AT ALL TIMES**. Some of our kayakers are borrowing kayaks. If you are borrowing a kayak, we ask you to please arrive at the race site by **AT LEAST 6:45 am**. If you are lending a kayak, paddle, and lifejacket (**THANK YOU**) - **PLEASE** show up by at least 6:45 am so that we offload your yaks and can pair kayaks with yakkers. Lenders, please do not be upset if your kayak does not end up being used - we cannot accurately predict which swimmers/kayakers will actually show up on race day, and the more we have, the safer all of our swimmers are. Kayaks will be assigned in the following priority: 5 mile loaners will get first dibs. 1- and 2- mile loaners will be assigned on a first-come-first-served basis.

Kayak offloading will occur in the boat dock parking lot at Ditto Landing and all kayakers will remain there for their safety briefing at 7:45 and loading into the water. We will have two volunteers stationed near the parking lot. As you pull in, they will offer to offload your kayak in order to save you some carrying. Please **LABEL** your gear (kayak, life vest, and paddle) with your name somewhere. We can try to label it for you, but would be easier if we didn't have to and we may not have a Sharpie handy.

ALL KAYAKERS MUST bring your cell phone in a ziploc (or double ziploc) bags so that you can bring it with you in your kayak in case of emergency. While we will have rescue and Coast Guard vessels attending us, we want you to be able to phone for assistance if needed. We will have laminated cards just for the 5-mile kayakers with emergency phone numbers on them and you will each receive a waterproof copy of our Inclement Weather Plan which will tell you what to do if weather changes for the worse during your (long) race. We will go over this plan during the pre-race briefing. We do all of this because during the second half of the swim, 5-milers will be on the river side of the island where swimmers are stretched out over a larger area. Again, rescue squad and race powerboats will be watching you, so you will not be alone out there.

After the safety briefing, kayakers will exit Ditto Landing harbor and paddle to the swim start, which is around to the left about 0.25 miles after exiting the harbor. All boat traffic has been stopped between 7:45 and 8:45 am so that kayakers will have safe passage.

KAYAKERS, PLEASE DO NOT BE AFRAID OR SHY to get in the path of swimmers who are off course. Be aggressive yet kind! They will appreciate the savings of time and safety!! We count on you to help them see what they cannot see from their vantage point.

On another note re: safety: There may be wood debris logs/etc nearest the shore - we know your swimmer will want to stay near the shore to be faster going upstream but better to be safe than sorry! Stay a safe distance from shore and **WATCH FOR LOGS** - they may be underwater and hard to see.

At the finish area, please steer clear of the finish area. Once your swimmer has finished, move away from the finish area. This is for your swimmer's safety and our timers' sanity! Thank you!

Inclement Weather Information

Rest assured, we are tracking weather. We will send out an email update to you again on Friday if there are any planned changes or concerns related to weather or river flows related to weather.

Just so you know what we are thinking...in the event of lightning or incoming storms, we will delay the start of the event 30 minutes at a time twice and would need to cancel the race after that. There are no refunds should this happen due to the fact that everything is paid for already, and all proceeds go to charity anyway. Eat ice cream and be happy you are providing food for those in need!

All kayakers will be provided with a waterproof copy and have a discussion at the kayaker safety meeting for the Inclement Weather Plan which has details should we need to affect an on-water evacuation. This would really only impact the 5 milers because we would not start the 1 and 2 mile races if we knew we did not have at least a window we could finish the 1 and 2 mile races in. Pop-up thunderstorms, however, could happen within the window of the 5 mile race and again, and we want to be prepared.

We also ask that you "like" and frequently visit our Facebook event page where we will keep you informed of the status of the event in real time. <https://www.facebook.com/SwimHobbsIsland> . Realize that FB has a complicated algorithm for showing you things, and we don't want you to miss anything, so please visit the page itself for up to date updates!

Post Race Events:

Please stick around to enjoy the great post-race food and hydration, including our famous all you can eat ice cream sundae bar replete with calories that science says you need after all of that swimming (you can't argue with science). We'll begin serving at about 9:30am. We plan to have awards for 1 and 2 milers at around 10:30 and awards for 5-milers at 11. Be kind to our timers if there are delays. They are volunteers and we do our best!

Supporters:

Many thanks to Team Rocket and our fantastic volunteers and sponsors, without whom this race would not be remotely possible. Thank you to Tony Osani and Valley Pizza (Domino's) for the post-race pizzas! Thank you to Fleet Feet of Huntsville for providing our wonderfully colorful swim caps! Thank you to XTERRA for the door prize mesh bags! Thank you to John Butterfield, Financial Advisor with Edward Jones for our awards glasses and photos with free downloads! Thank you to Results Physiotherapy for providing FREE post-race massages! Thank you to U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary, and Huntsville-Madison County Rescue Squad for providing the nation's best race-day safety and medical support! Thank you once again to the marvelous Ms. Lisa Shedd and her helpers for being the ice cream sundae bar queen!

Safety Briefing for Swimmers and Kayakers

READ THIS LIKE YOUR LIFE DEPENDS ON IT, BECAUSE IT DOES: Be familiar with this information, which will be repeated on race day during the safety briefings.

Swim Hobbs Island Safety Briefing for Swimmers and Kayakers - !!AWARENESS = SAFETY!!

NO SWIMMING IN THE HARBOR AT ANY TIME! NO WARMING UP IN THE RIVER! NO IPODS!

1. Kayakers must all have and be wearing lifejackets at all times.
2. All Swimmers: Be aware of how you are feeling. Signal for help if you need it. If tired, flip onto back.
3. All Swimmers: Listen to the kayakers. After 2nd warning to do something, you will be disqualified.
4. All Swimmers: Remember that the current is strongest in the middle of the channel, listen to the kayakers, stay close to buoys, keeping the buoys on your left at all times.
5. There may be wood debris logs/etc nearest the shore due to dry weather this month - we know you want to stay near the shore to be fast going upstream but better to be safe than sorry! Stay a safe distance from shore.
6. 5 mile swimmers each have a designated pilot
 - a. There will be orange and yellow buoys on the first one mile of the swim.
 - b. Keep all buoys on your left at all times during the swim.
 - c. After the first mile of the swim, all swimmer/kayakers will navigate the rest on their own.
 - d. It is imperative that you stay to the right, close to the island. We may have motor boats/jet skis/large barges in the water and it is dangerous if you are in the middle of the river.
 - e. You can cling to kayaks, boats, buoys, but you cannot use them to make forward progress if you want to be eligible for awards. If you stop making forward progress, then signal for help.
7. 5 mile pilots will stay within 20 feet of their swimmer.
8. 5 mile pilots need to have enough nutrition to support themselves and the swimmer for at least 3 hours.
9. 2 mile swimmers - Keep the buoys on your left at all times.
10. 2 mile swimmers - Pay attention to the direction and guidance of the kayak pilots.
11. 2 mile swimmers – your course will be marked with yellow and orange buoys between the yellow buoys.
 - a. You will swim upstream, following the orange buoys, then cross the channel to the island side of the river to the first yellow buoy and continue swimming upstream to the second yellow buoy, farthest upstream. You will swim around this buoy and then swim downstream, following the same path as upstream, keeping all the buoys on your left during the entire swim.
 - b. If you stop making forward progress, either signal for help or begin swimming home.
 - c. Notify finish line personnel if you did not reach the turn around point.
 - d. You can cling to kayaks, boats, buoys, but you cannot use them to make forward progress.

- e. Swimmers need to be VERY careful when crossing the channel.
12. 1 mile swimmers: Pay attention to the direction and guidance of the kayak pilots.
 - a. You will swim upstream to the first yellow buoy. You will swim around it and then swim downstream, keeping all the buoys on your left during the entire swim.
 13. Kayakers: raise paddle if need help or if swimmer is in distress. Boats will watch for raised paddles. Kayakers, if you see another kayak with a raised paddle do the same to get the signal to nearest boat.
 14. Kayaks will have whistles. Motor boats will have horns. To be used if a swimmer is in distress.
 - a. One blow: ATTENTION -- "Look this Way!"
 - b. Two blows: STOP -- "I need to stop" (we probably won't need this one)
 - c. Three Blows: EMERGENCY -- "We have a problem" (Swimmer needs help)
 15. Boats are our biggest hazard even though USCG and Rescue Squad are there to watch for us. Be aware!
 16. Organizers reserve the right to terminate your swim if, in their judgement, you will not be able to complete the entire course – cutoffs are 3hrs 30 mins at the tip of the island (12 noon) and 5 hrs or 1:30 pm at the finish.
 17. Keep in order after finishing so that we can get your race number.
 18. IMPERATIVE! Check in at the t-shirt tent when you are finished so that we know you are done and safe!