

Dave Heeren

Sea Captain Steers Course Of Poenisch's Cuba Swim

Bendt Lyngé was having a few beers with friends at the Village Inn Motel on Fort Lauderdale beach.

The charter boat captain was between jobs, but he had no idea how close he was to getting one of the strangest and most difficult assignments of his life.

Lyngé, who lives in Plantation, was told by the manager of the motel that someone in the motel was looking for a captain.

A few minutes later, he found himself listening as 65-year-old Walter Poenisch told him he needed a guide boat captain for a swim from Cuba to the United States.

"At first, I thought of it as just a job," Lyngé said in his Danish accent. "I thought the old man would never make it. But when we get to Cuba and I see how excited all the Cubans are, I decide I want to see the old man swim."

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This was a few days before Diana Nyad was to make her well-promoted Cuba-to-U.S. swim.

Because of the publicity surrounding the Nyad swim, there were no American reporters to see Poenisch off. The re-

Poenisch's crew consisted of Lyngé, who never had seen Poenisch before the night they met at the Village Inn; Jim Mims, founder and president of the International Federation of Professional Ocean Swimmers and Divers; boat owner Glenn Drummond and Poenisch's wife, Faye.

Lyngé decided at the outset that since no reporters were present, they would not believe Poenisch made the swim whether he actually did so or not. That viewpoint, he said, proved helpful in making a decision later that would enable Poenisch to complete the swim.

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At the outset, Lyngé steered the 58-foot boat in a northerly direction to see how well Poenisch could swim across the Gulfstream current. But when he saw how rough the water was, he knew he would have to cooperate with the northeasterly current instead of fighting it.

"The wind was a steady 10 to 15 knots at all times," Lyngé said. "At first it was southeasterly, and that helped us. But we had to roll with the seas. They were 4 to 6 feet, and at times we could see an 8-footer

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Inspectors Find Exposed Wires, Old B Ranch Hit With C



Staff Photo by KATHLEEN PELLEGRINO

A colt stands beneath exposed electrical wiring in one of the Merry U Ranch stables.

Broward Mall Settles Do

By David S. Heeren
Staff Writer

After a frantic first two weeks, the Broward Mall is settling down to business.

Frank McGourty, the mall's general manager, says the mall apparently has survived the hectic first few days when mobs of shoppers dodged workmen putting finishing touches on stores.

"People are being kind to us," McGourty said. "I think they realize we have had some touching up to do. They have continued to come out in large numbers.

"In fact, I was surprised the second weekend was so strong. I expected business to be slow, but it wasn't. We have had brisk sales from the beginning."

Two of the most popular areas of the mall are a children's play court and a patio where shoppers have their choice of take-out restaurants when they want to eat a quick lunch.

McGourty said one of the concerns of the mall's management was that children would be left by parents in the children's court to play and would wander away and be lost.

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As for his recently resigned position, Tschirret said, "My job as athletic director is going the way of the bald eagle. It's not extinct, but it's endangered."

Of the recent cutbacks, Tschirret was most upset over the loss of ninth grade football that was played by Piper and eight other schools in the 20-member Broward County Athletic Association.

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coming and we would have to manipulate the shark cage a little. I had to watch the current and the waves."

Lynge said in the early going, the wind compensated for the current. While the Gulfstream was trying to take the swimmer in a northeast direction, parallel to the coast of Florida, the wind helped him hold to a more northerly course that eventually would bring him within sight of land.

The worst part of the swim for Lynge occurred at night. By the moon's light, he had to watch the shark cage and maneuver to the best of his ability. He could see the swimmer's silhouette in the water.

The crisis for Poenisch came after he had been in the water for about 24 hours. At this point, the wind changed direction until it was blowing from the northeast, in his face.

"I could see he was having a hard time," Lynge said. "He was hollering and spitting out salt water. The waves were coming over his snorkel and into his mouth."

It was at around this time that Lynge first spotted Sombrero Light in Marathon, 14 to 16 miles upwind.

Drummond, sitting next to Lynge, wanted to head directly for the light. Lynge believed it would be impossible for the tiring swimmer to make headway against the strong wind.

Lynge

gave him more free time.

Eleven minor sports and assistant coaching positions presently are open at Piper. Tschirret explained this by saying, "The pay is lousy and the working conditions are mediocre."

Trying to fill such positions, which on the average pay \$750 to \$1,000, was a major headache for Tschirret.

"We had an argument," Lynge said. "Drummond wanted to go to Marathon because some reporters were waiting there. I told him, 'Look, they aren't going to believe he made the swim anyway.' I didn't want to bring in a corpse."

Mims agreed with Lynge, so the captain changed to a northwesterly course across the current. The wind was now coming from the right instead of the front.

* * *

When the cage touched bottom, most of the crew wanted the swimmer to continue to shore, but again Lynge intervened. "They didn't know the customs laws," he said. "I told them we couldn't do it."

By the time the reporters were informed the swimmer had landed in Boot Key nine miles south of Marathon, Poenisch was unconscious and retching in the boat.

The skepticism of the press irritated Lynge, even though he had predicted it.

"We could have stayed in the boat and had Cuban cigars and put him in the water about a half-mile from Marathon, and he could have come in smiling to all the reporters.

"But Walter is a determined man," Lynge continued. "He really want something and he say, 'I gotta do it,' and he do it."

Staff Photo by FRANK A.

Mike Tschirret has more time to spend with his family since resigning as Piper High School's athletic director

He credited coaches having to chaffer players around without benefit of liability insurance or gasoline reimbursements, in addition to the pay, as a major part of the problem in attracting coaches.

In light of the school board's sports cutback policy, Tschirret sees no reason to believe that the situation will get any better.

Despite being outspoken about the reasons for his resignation, Tschirret refused to term it a protest.

"All of these things helped me make up my mind. I'm not trying to protest against anybody or anything. I'm doing the best thing for Mike Tschirret."



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