



IAN SMITH/VANCOUVER SUN

Kent Milsom of North Vancouver finished first in the 75th annual Bay Challenge with a time of 1 hour, 54 minutes.

First-timer claims victory in 75th Bay Challenge swim

48 people swim from West Vancouver to Kitsilano

BY HEATHER TRAVIS
VANCOUVER SUN

GREATER VANCOUVER | A first-timer beat a six-time winner in a nine-kilometre open-water swimming race from Sandy Cove, West Vancouver to Kitsilano Beach on Sunday.

"I am an endurance guy," said Kent Milsom, 32, who came in six minutes ahead of 56-year-old Allan Bell, with a time of 1:54:15.

The two were among 48 swimmers, including 16 individual competitors and 10 relay teams, participating in the 75th annual Bay Challenge.

Organized by the Vancouver Open Water Swim Association, the historic race first took place in August of 1931, with Percy Norman, one of Canada's top distance swimmers, taking home the sterling silver trophy.

Milsom said that to train for the race, he swam six kilometres six times a week in a pool. But Sunday's waves surprised him. "In the ocean, it is totally different," he said.

Bell said his age is not a factor, and that he feels completely comfortable in the cold water. "This was a very easy swim," he said. "I could swim back."

He said the key to making the best time is to have a good crew and to feel out the course.

"There is a technique to swimming in rough water," said Bell. "I don't swallow water, but that is called *experience*. I used to swallow a lot."

Each swimmer is accompanied by a rowboat to keep them on course and help them navigate.

Annelle Harmer, 37, had the best time overall in the women's division, finishing 2:26:04.

"It is an accomplishment just finishing," said Harmer. "It is especially an accomplishment just showing up at the start."

"It is a gruelling race," said Les Jickling, a board member with the open-water swim association. "It is a select group of people that want to compete in a race like this."

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