



Ros Hardiman, Honor Swimmer, Great Britain, 2024



Videos: [Interview 1](#)

Ros Hardiman has completed the following marathons: 2009 English Channel 33 km in 20 hours and 17 minutes; 2019 Loch Ness 36.2 km in 20 hours and 10 minutes at age 67; 2007 Lake Windermere 16.9 km in 7 hours and 30 minutes; and 1984 Southsea War Memorial to Ryde Isle of Wight – Southsea (2-way) 11.3 km 6 hours and 27 minutes.

Ros contracted poliomyelitis in 1958 at the age of six and has absolutely no use of her legs and lower back in the water; all propulsion comes from her arms. Ros grew up in the era where disabilities were hidden. She won several prizes in her first swimming club in 1965 but was not allowed to participate further since her parents did not feel that she “fitted in.” Fifteen years later, in 1980, three local swimming clubs refused to let her join due to her physical disability. She found acceptance and gained confidence while completing in Paralympic competitions in the 1990s. Ros then moved to the open water and competed in 1 to 8 km events. She then looked to marathons and was a regular on the weekend training sessions on Dover Beach for several years.

In her first attempt at the English Channel in 2008 she swam for more than 25 hours and missed the French coast by 1 km and was awarded the Frank Richards Endurance Award by the IMSHOF Honor Organization the Channel Swimming & Piloting Federation (CS&PF).

Ros can only walk a few steps using calipers, crutches, and a back brace; she is mostly dependent upon a wheelchair. This makes her a slower-than-average swimmer and her lack of leg movement makes hypothermia more likely. Logistics present further challenges: getting to and from the water is by “hunching”, on her rear end or having to crawl; so getting into support boats is tricky. Taking feeds during long swims is not easy since she can’t use her legs to tread water and maintain a position near the boat or kick upwards to reach a drink bottle – especially challenging in fresh water. Ros has been unable to take on marathon swims outside of the UK because organizers have been unable or unwilling to accept a swimmer with her physical disability.

Ros competed in the Paralympic Games in 1996 Atlanta and 2000 Sydney and between 1995 and 2001 held multiple world records in the S7 and SB6 disability classes. She has raised funds for disability swim clubs and volunteered as helper during swim sessions and served on committees for local disability swimming clubs and Portsmouth’s canoeing club. Other awards by the CS&PF in 2009: Ray Scott Award for the oldest successful swimmer of the year and the Peter Adams Award for the most successful endurance swim. Her Loch Ness swim earned Ros the Hans Belay Trophy for the Swim of the Year from the IMSHOF Honor Organization British Long Distance Swimming Association.

Ros adds: I’ve found great friendship and camaraderie amongst open water swimmers and have had tremendous help from several people along the way to whom I owe a great debt. I’ve always had to fight to gain acceptance and to pursue my dreams. I like to think that I can encourage others to do the same, I firmly believe that the more you do, the more you CAN do, so go for it! “

[Expanded Biography \(Openwaterpedia\)](#)

[Long Swims Database \(Marathon Swimmers Federation\)](#)