

Beat: Sports

British woman dies during English Channel charity swim

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USPA News - A British woman died Sunday while trying to swim across the English Channel to raise money for charity, French and British officials confirmed on Monday. She was just one mile (1.6 kilometer) short of completing the swim across the Channel.

Susan Taylor, 34, had trained for more than a year to swim 21 miles (34 kilometers) across the English Channel to raise money for both Diabetes UK and Rainbows Children's Hospice in the English town of Loughborough. She was one of several charity swimmers who had been given permission by British officials to attempt to cross the Channel on Sunday. Taylor, who was being followed by her husband Stephen Taylor and her support crew on a nearby boat, had set off from Samphire Hoe near Dover on early Sunday morning. She had left at around 1 a.m. local time but got into difficulty at around 5:30 p.m. as she entered Wissant Bay near Cap Gris Nez, just 1 mile (1.6 kilometer) short of completing her swim. "[She] collapsed suddenly in the water, just off the French coast," her family said in a statement on Monday. "Susan was immediately recovered from the water and received medical treatment on the support vessel. She was airlifted by helicopter to a French hospital where she was pronounced dead." Donations continued to pour in on Tuesday as word of Taylor's death spread. According to her online charity fundraising page, she raised more than £53,300 (\$80,600) for Rainbows Children's Hospice and nearly £9,000 (\$13,600) for Diabetes UK. She had aimed to raise at least £1,250 (\$1,890) for the children's hospice. "She was a wonderful woman who would do anything for anybody," Rainbows Children's Hospice said in a statement. "She has been a much loved Ambassador at Rainbows for over two years, helping out at events and tirelessly fundraising for us. She was more than an Ambassador; she was part of the Rainbows family." The hospice said Taylor was "totally dedicated" to Rainbows, even taking time off from her work to devote more efforts to her fundraising activities. "She was really looking forward to taking part in her Create A Ripple challenge and we are all so proud of what she achieved," they added. Barbara Young, Chief Executive at Diabetes UK, said Taylor had previously undertaken a number of open-water swimming challenges, including swimming the Channel as part of a Diabetes UK relay team. "We are extremely sad to hear of the tragic death of Susan Taylor during her Channel Swim, which she organised independently to raise funds for us," she said. Taylor's family described her as an experienced long-distance swimmer who had prepared tirelessly for the challenge. "Susan took great pride in her fundraising for some amazing charities and we would like her sacrifice to be recognized in the only way she would have wanted," they said. The Channel Swimming Association (CSA), meanwhile, extended its sympathy and thoughts to Taylor's family and friends. "She was known and loved by so many including those at the CSA of whom many knew her personally. Susan was raising money for Rainbows for her Channel solo swim and trained so hard," the association said. In a similar incident, 45-year-old Irish man Paraic Casey died in July 2012 while attempting to swim across the English Channel from Samphire Hoe near Dover. Casey got into difficulty less than a mile short of completing the swim, which is hazardous due to jellyfish, seaweed, debris and hundreds of vessels.

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