

GRETA THE GREAT:

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Thirty-one swimmers from sixteen countries grease up, in the chilly darkness of Cap Gris Nez, for the annual cross-Channel race with its thousand-guinea Trophy given by Billy Butlin. There's a record entry this year - twenty-six men and five women. This is one race in which it's by no means certain that a man will win, though it's a male record; last year's best British performance was by Rosemary George, here again this year. But with the tricky currents of the English Channel, anything can happen.

The race is on - and thirty-one of the world's finest swimmers wade into the sea, accompanied by a fleet of little boats whose job it will be to give them nourishment and encouragement on the long trip to England.

Dawn breaks - and a helicopter joins the motley procession.

And it is a woman in the lead - thirty-year-old Greta Anderson of California, who won the race last year -. Then, she swam under her native Danish colours - but she's married to an American, so this year she's battling it out for the United States. Greta's a world record holder over many distances, and has nearly 200 trophies and gold and silver medals on her mantelpiece - and as she forces her way yard by yard towards the Dover cliffs, it's clear she's going to add one more to the collection. And what's more she's broken the women's cross-Channel record by the fantastic margin of 1 hour and 42 minutes, and is only ten minutes outside the men's record.

Second is Pakistan's top swimmer, Brogen Das. He's four hours behind Greta - but it's a great achievement to finish at all. For only six complete the crossing. Billy Butlin presents the Trophy to Greta - who reveals she was so cold at one stage she nearly gave up. Then she remembered the time she raced off Mexico with sharks all round her - and decided that if you can take sharks, you can take the English weather!