

Kostich again a winner at Coral Reef Swim

By AARON GRAY
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ST. CROIX — Every year, Alex Kostich competes in numerous swimming races up and down the West Coast of the United States and even in Hawaii. But at the end of every racing season, he heads East for a special trip to St. Croix, and he said it's worth the wait each time.



Alex Kostich

"From Los Angeles, it's a long way to fly, but I love it too much," the 40-year-old said. "The actual race, the people here, the warm water ... it's the same reasons I come back every year."

For the 11th time in the last 12 years, Kostich won the 5-mile race — a beautiful stretch of crystal-clear water from Buck Island to the Buccaneer Hotel — at the 15th annual Coral Reef Swim on Sunday.

He swam a time of 1 hour, 46 minutes and 4 seconds and was followed by Good Hope School student Bryson Mays (1:58:20), Tennessee resident Jimmy Welborn (2:01:26) and 28-year-old Virgin Islander Michael Rogers (2:03:00).

Kostich, who trains every day at an indoor pool across the street from his L.A. office, has put together some impressive win streaks, but nothing like his current run on St. Croix.

"It helps me get up early in the morning," he said. "Because at the end of the day, I know all roads lead to St. Croix."

Among his many races, Kostich has



Daily News Photo by CRISTIAN SIMESCU

Meridith Jones of Chaddsforth, Pa., left, runs past Mary West of San Antonio, Tx., to finish first among women in the 5-mile race in the Coral Reef Swim.

won the La Jolla (Calif.) Rough Water Swim six times. He's competed in the Waikiki (Hawaii) Rough Water Swim 17 times, winning three times.

Meredith Jones, 37, of Chaddsford, Penn., finished first among women in the 5-mile race in a time of 2:15:11. She was followed very closely by Texas resident Mary West (2:15:21) and Virgin Islander Michael-Anne Myrvang (2:16:32).

"It was probably our best race so far in terms of the number of participants," said race director Suzanne Rychlik, who works at the Buccaneer Hotel on St. Croix. "The two-mile race has grown significantly, and I think people like to use that race to try things out."

The Buccaneer held an open-water

swimming clinic on Saturday, and Rychlik said it was well-attended. Race organizers added the two-mile race to the event three years ago and participants have responded.

The 5-mile race attracted 58 men and women Sunday, while the 2-mile race consisted of 48 men and women. Of the top 60 swimmers — the 15 finishers in each of the four races — 17 were for the territory.

In the men's 2-mile race, it was an Ivy League swimming reunion. Colin O'Brady of Portland, Ore., and St. Croix native Kieran Locke — who were roommates at Yale University — crossed the finish line together in first place in a time of 52 minutes and 47 seconds.

"This is my offseason," said O'Brady, a professional triathlete who competed in a triathlon world championship event in September. "I've had a month to enjoy myself, so this was a fun way to catch up with some old friends."

Their college teammate Ned Stanthorpe took 10th in the 2-mile race, while Quinn Fitzgerald (Yale) and James Lawler (Harvard) finished sixth and seventh, respectively, in the 5-mile race.

Locke is the older brother of Morgan Locke, who represented the USVI in the Central American and Caribbean Games last summer in Mayaguez, Puerto Rico. Kieran Locke had surgery last summer, finished his rehabilitation two months ago and took part in his first competitive race since March 2009.

For O'Brady, it was his first time competing in the Coral Reef Swim.

"I'm familiar with different races all over the world, and I just loved competing here," he said.

St. Croix Dolphins swim team members Caylee Watson (0:57:27) and JJ Washshah (1:02:20) finished first and third in the female 2-mile race. Texas resident Kristen Zinser, 21, took second.

Watson, Washshah, 5-mile men's runner-up Mays and Tony Hendricks, who finished third in the men's 2-mile race, each competed in the Caribbean Island Swimming Championships in Havana, Cuba in June. Mays also won the 7th annual Beach-To-Beach Power Swim in May and was three minutes shy of a course record.

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15th annual Coral Reef Swim

Buck Island to The Buccaneer Hotel

5-Mile Male Results

1. Alex Kostich	1:46.04
2. Bryson Mays*	1:58.20
3. Jimmy Welborn	2:01.26
4. Michael Rogers*	2:03.00
5. Dan Cervantes	2:10.13
6. Quinn Fitzgerald	2:11.56
7. James Lawler	2:12.57
8. Evan Warehime*	2:13.19
9. Victor Mestre	2:17.07
9. Teodoro Capriles	2:17.07
10. Thomas Little	2:21.51
11. Bob Halk*	2:27.06
12. Stephen Childers	2:28.09
13. Maxwell Adams	2:40.19
14. Joseph Frey	2:41.05
15. Chris Howell*	2:43.05

5-Mile Female Results

1. Meredith Jones	2:15.11
2. Mary West	2:15.21
3. M.A. Myrvang*	2:16.32
4. Monica Heinrich	2:19.12
5. Annette Holmgren	2:22.32
6. Valerie Weichert	2:22.33
7. Sydne Didier	2:25.52
8. Jen Andrews*	2:27.52
9. Sara Griffis	2:28.28
10. Jeanne Muihern	2:38.57
11. Heather Fox	2:45.28
12. Susan Kasimer	2:47.03
13. Denise Priddy	2:48.29
14. Beth Prodoehl	2:53.58
15. E. Armstrong*	2:54.13

2-Mile Male Results

1. Colin O'Brady	52.47
2. Kieran Locke*	52.47
3. Tony Hendricks*	1:01.33
4. Brent Mays*	1:04.28
5. William Cocoran	1:05.45
6. Matthew Mays*	1:06.46
7. Carlos Alvarez	1:10.04
8. Jaymee Carey	1:10.33
9. Adriel Sanes*	1:12.43
10. Ned Stanthorpe	1:14.18
11. Joseph Saade	1:20.29
12. Chris Roman	1:21.31
13. Travis Levy	1:22.45
14. Jonathan Bround*	1:31.32
15. James Whitehurst*	1:32.54

2-Mile Female Results

1. Caylee Watson*	57.27
2. Kristen Zinser	58.17
3. JJ Washshah*	1:02.20
4. Leigh Ann Ladymon	1:03.02
5. Leta Gattton	1:01.25
6. Frances Gray	1:04.05
7. Stephanie Crofton	1:04.33
8. Ellie Nash	1:06.42
9. Beth Bentley	1:14.24
10. Melanie Heinrich	1:14.27
11. P. Chamberlain	1:15.01
12. Lara Gerner	1:16.21
13. Ellet Jones	1:16.41
14. Kimberly Russo	1:19.53
15. Debera Wood	1:22.04

*denotes V.I. swimmers
Source: race timer Wallace Williams