

Virgin STRIVE Challenge 2016

Wetsuit guidance – Strait of Messina

Our local supplier in Sicily is comfortable that each swimmer chooses whether or not to wear a wetsuit for their swim section of Strive 2016. However, it's a delicate balance of weighing up the benefits of wearing a wetsuit (buoyancy support, confidence for some swimmers etc) with the potential problems (discomfort due to lack of training in it, and possible overheating).

We have been liaising with a number of suppliers who we work with who are experts in open water swimming and safety controls, and they have offered the following guidance (which is based on British Triathlon Federation advice) as to if/when wetsuits are appropriate to be worn for open water swimming:

If the water temperature is:

- more than 26 degrees you should definitely not wear a wetsuit
- 22-25 degrees you should consider the environmental conditions, and your swimming speed & body composition (the cooler the air temperature and slower and skinnier the swimmer the more acceptable a wetsuit)
- 15-21 degrees you should consider wearing a wetsuit if you are a slower swimmer, and also have a low body fat amount
- 14 or less degrees you should definitely wear a wetsuit

The average water temperature in the waters around Messina in September is 25 degrees, and 22 degrees in October. We are therefore likely to be on the cusp of the guidelines and our advice is to train both with and without your wetsuit (if you're considering wearing one) as we will reserve the right to request that participants do not wear them on the day should the water temperature be extreme compared to the normal.

If you are renting or buying a wetsuit for the event please make sure you consider the following:

- Take expert advice – different sports wetsuits are for different sporting disciplines and of different thicknesses according to the anticipated weather
- Train in the wetsuit if you plan to wear it for the event
- Your wetsuit should be fitted and snug, but not tight or uncomfortable

You will have to wear a swim cap for the swim.

If you are swimming the Strait as part of the core team, your recorded time will note if you have worn a wetsuit.

Whilst not offering a definitive control at this stage ahead of the swim, we are acutely aware that all participants will seek comfort from the method in which they have been training and the swim clothing and/or wetsuit they have been wearing. We will therefore do everything that is reasonable and safe to enable you to swim in your preferred set up.

If you have any questions please do get in touch.

The Virgin STRIVE Team