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SPORTS

SATURDAY, APRIL 26, 2008 • (FLVCO)

NORTH COUNTY TIMES



Shark attack stuns fellow triathletes

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STAFF WRITER

Heather Fuhr has gone swimming in North County waters for years, but not once has she ever encountered a shark.

So when the Encinitas resident and winner of 12 Ironman Triathlons and a Triathlon Hall of Famer got

More coverage

For more on the shark attack, see A-1, nctimes.com

the news that fellow triathlete David Martin, 66, died of wounds from a shark bite on Friday, she was stunned.

"It was definitely a shock to hear that a fellow triathlete lost his life to a shark attack," Fuhr wrote in an e-mail. "Our thoughts go out to his family,

friends and those that were out in the water with him. I cannot even begin to imagine the emotions they are feeling."

At the time of the attack, City Fire and Lifeguard Rescue Services said Martin was with 10 other swimmers about 150 yards offshore at Fletcher Cove as part of a morning swim put on by the Triathlon Club of San Diego.

Fuhr said she has never put much thought into shark attacks off the coast of North County.

"Of course, as a swimmer or paddler, one is always aware that they are out there," Fuhr wrote, "but I guess it has never been something I have put much thought into ... until now."

Bob Babbitt, who covers triathlons as the longtime

publisher of Competitor Magazine, said fellow triathletes need not worry about the fatal attack.

"I guess they should be concerned with this as much as they should be concerned about being hit by lightning," Babbitt said. "The ocean is the ocean, and one of the attractions of what we do it, is it is exhilarating.

"To be out at the ocean

swimming, or running can both be dangerous, we all know that. But nobody goes in thinking, 'I'm going to be bit by a shark.'"

Babbitt did not know Martin well, only seeing him at races around San Diego and North County. Martin was the age group (65-69) winner in three races last year.

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"That group is less of a training group and more of a social group," Babbitt said. "They hang out together and swim a mile to two miles at Fletcher Cove, then go to breakfast. They were members, not sure if all 10 were, but it doesn't matter because those guys get together every Friday."

Babbitt said he would have been in the water himself if the ocean temperature was warmer, adding that he would get in today if it wasn't for the 72-hour advisory to stay out of the water on an eight-mile stretch from Torrey Pines State Beach to South Carlsbad State Beach.

"I'm in that exact location 100 times a year," Babbitt said. "I go every day when the water warms up. If the ocean was open

(right now), I'd be out there."

Babbitt said he has never seen a shark in the waters off Solana Beach.

"I've seen dolphins 10-12 times a year, but never seen anything like a fin or a shark," he said. "Just one of those things. I don't consider the ocean dangerous, but you do have to know what you are doing out there. They knew what they were doing, but this was just a random act. It was just one of those random and weird occurrences."

The Encinitas Surf Festival was canceled due to the shark attack. But organizer and surfer Jon Peterson said he isn't worried about another attack.

"If a swell hit today, I would be out there in a heartbeat," said Peterson, who is a firefighter. "Lightning doesn't always strike twice."

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