

## 2010 SEASON-OPENING LA JOLLA SHORES SWIM By Michelle Panik

Spring is here. With it come evening light, Padres baseball, and the Monday night La Jolla Shores Swim. This year it's sponsored by XTERRA WETSUITS, and wetsuits were a must for this early season swim in 60-degree water.

The other conditions, though, were ideal. The evening air temperature was in the high 60s with light winds. A 4:48 PM low tide of 0.28 feet was perfect for the swim's 6:00 PM start time. And one- to two-foot waves, no rip, and calm seas combined for an easy surf entry.

Swimmers met at the sea wall near the south bathrooms about 5:30 PM to reconnect with old friends, make new ones, and welcome those new to the Shores swim or open-water swimming in general.

I set my bag down next to Ryan Bittorf, who was doing his second-ever open water swim. Ryan was planning on swimming three-quarters of a mile, and told me, "I've been dying to get back into open-water swimming."

Claudia Flynn isn't new to the Shores swim, but it was her first ocean swim of the year, and her first time using a new wetsuit.

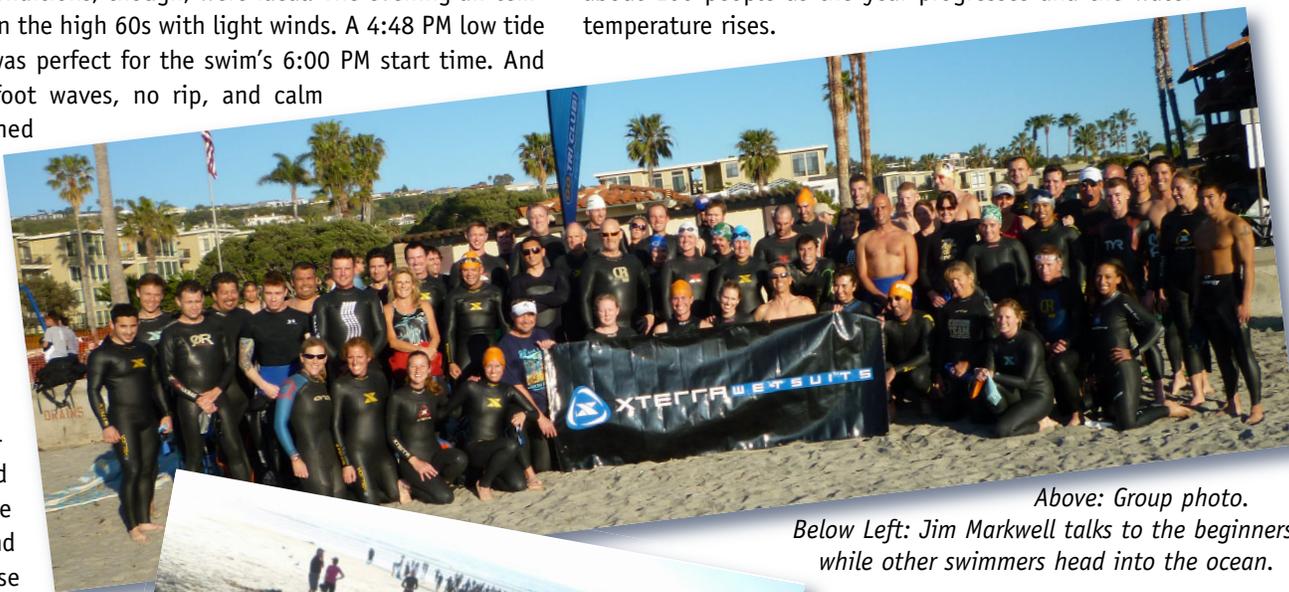
While snapping together a TCSD banner, President Thomas Johnson told me, "I want to say that this is the finest weather we've had for the season opener of the La Jolla Shores swim in the last 10 years."

Open-water Swim Coach Nikee Pomper was busy coordinating the swim and answering member questions, but she managed to tell me, "I'm most excited for people to meet new friends."

Jim Markwell, who's back for his second season as the Beginner Open Water Swim Coach, said he was looking forward to "helping people experience the joy of open-water swimming. (The ocean) is a big pool without lane lines."

Once suited up in black neoprene, members gathered against

the sea wall for a picture to commemorate the season's first swim. Nikee had predicted a turnout of 70-80 people. With 64 club members posing for the season-opener photo, she wasn't far off. While the turnout was great, the workout should grow to about 100 people as the year progresses and the water temperature rises.



*Above: Group photo.*

*Below Left: Jim Markwell talks to the beginners while other swimmers head into the ocean.*



The main group typically swims out past surf break, regroup, and then heads over to the half-mile or quarter-mile buoys (which are named by their distances from the Cove). Because the half-mile buoy wasn't yet in the water, swimmers got in some extra mileage by heading directly to the quarter-mile buoy, which is a round-trip one-and-a-half-mile swim.

Jim Markwell led a group of seven swimmers on a route that went out just past the surf break and turned left in order to parallel the La Jolla Shores Hotel and Marine Room. This course is a great way for beginners to get used to

open-water swimming because they don't go into water deeper than 12 feet. And if a swimmer becomes nervous, they can swim straight into shore.

XTERRA Rep and TCSD member Erin Merz said sponsoring both the Monday Shores and Friday Cove swims makes sense because "We're a local company and we want to have a presence in the San Diego community. The Tri Club is a huge group."

The Shores swim will be happening every Monday night through the spring, summer, and early fall. Because the summer beach crowds aren't out yet, parking's a cinch. Whether you're training for a sprint or Ironman race, or just want to smoke everyone in the upcoming aquathlons, now's a great time to come out and get in some early-season workouts.