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AT Feature:

Mitchell and Mom Inspire Heim-Bowen to Jump Back In

Story by Deborah Johnson



*Heim-Bowen with her mother, Bea Heim, at Nationals in May.
 (Photo by William Volckening)*

"Hi guys...you are not going to believe this...but I went to Nationals and did very, very well... beyond my expectations!" began the note we received from Suzanne Heim-Bowen May 24. In fact, Suzanne, a Walnut Creek Masters and Terrapins swimmer in the 45-49 age group, did her best times in the 50 free, 25.9 taking fifth place, fourth in the 50 fly with a 28.4, first in the 200 free in a 1:59.97 and 1st in the 500 free with a 5:18.7. "I was pleasantly surprised... so there is hope!!!" she exclaimed. You see, Suzanne, a Masters multi-world record holder and open water swimmer, was out of the water some eight months rehabbing from an injury (not related to swimming) and was a little nervous about competing again, understandably.

Her mom, Bea Heim, who swims in the 80-84 age group for Mt. Tamalpais Masters (and the reason why Suzanne swam in this meet), took fourth in the 50 free, third in the 200 free, second in the 500 free, and first in the 1000 free! Like mother, like daughter... "It was a nice trip." Suzanne reflected.

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"I am so lucky and grateful to have such great coaches and support system," Suzanne included. "Kerry O'Brien and the Walnut Creek Masters coaches (Mike Heaney and Debbie Santos) were all very concerned because I had 'disappeared' for a few months. Some of the masters swimmers and coaches had even planned to do a 'home raid' to cheer me up (I had just started to swim again, so I was busy paddling in the pool.). I couldn't ask for a more supportive group of people in the swimming community as the Walnut Creek Masters and the Terrapins. I am truly blessed."

Speaking of the Terrapins, Suzanne said that she has to... "thank Ray Mitchell (Terrapin National team head coach) and Path Fitness for hanging in there with me. Poor Ray was getting my e-mails, 'I am not swimming anymore. This is too hard and painful..., etc.' I wish people knew how caring he is. He was really supportive, and we came up with a plan and it worked. I still have issues, but I am learning to manage the pain and figure it out. I am just grateful I am swimming again!"

Below is a "Letters to the Editor" regarding Suzanne.

Great to read your article about Suzanne Heim-Bowen in the 5 June edition. I was with a group of Aussi Masters at the World Championships in Italy in 2004 and had the pleasure of meeting Suzanne and her husband who were staying at the same motel. She was very modest about her talent. Hopefully she will be able to see her in action at this year's championships in San Francisco/Stanford. Myself and a few other North Queenslanders will be joining a group of about 30 Aussi's traveling to San Francisco.

John Barrett
 Rats of Tobruk Club Townsville
 North Queensland, Australia

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