

## GARNETT THE SUNS' MISSING PIECE?

Phoenix and Minnesota have had cursory conversations about what it might take to get Kevin Garnett in a Suns uniform next year, but the price might be too steep. **7C**

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Anna Raynor competes at U.S. track championships. **3C**

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Y, JUNE 23, 2007 | www.StarNewsOnline.com

# Major triathlon slated for area

## Iron-distance event will test the best

By **Sam Scott**  
 Staff Writer

On Sunday, 500 people will descend on Pleasure Island for the Kure Beach Double Sprint Triathlon, racing through approximately half a mile of ocean swimming, three miles of running and 12 miles of biking.

A walk in the park, in other words.

At least that's how all the flapping about will appear compared to the area's newest race. This week, Set Up Events, which organizes scores of triathlons from Washington D.C. to Georgia, announced that Wilmington will be the site the sport's most brutal type of race — an iron-distance triathlon.

The legs wobble just thinking about it. On 7 a.m. on Nov. 1, 2008, organizers expect 500 elite racers to gather at the south tip of Wrightsville Beach for a long day of competition: a 2.4-mile swim to Seapath Marina, followed by a 112-mile

### 140 MILES — THE HARD WAY

On Nov. 1, 2008, nearly 500 elite athletes will enjoy all that Southeastern North Carolina has to offer with a:

- 2.4-mile swim from the southern tip of Wrightsville Beach to Seapath Marina, then ...
- 112-mile bicycle ride into Bladen County and back to the 'U.S.S. North Carolina,' then ...
- Run a full marathon — 26.2 miles.

bike ride into Bladen County and back to the *U.S.S. North Carolina*, followed by a full marathon, 26.2 miles.

To put it in perspective, the winner probably will take about nine hours to finish, people who are done in 12 hours will have bragging rights over most, and

SEE TRIATHLON | **7C**

## TRIATHLON

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many won't stop moving until well after dark, even with the early morning start, said Bill Scott, head of Set Up Events, which is based in Kure Beach.

Scott is planning to bring in 30 to 40 light towers to illuminate the run course for those still going after nightfall, he said. The cut-off time is 17 hours, or midnight.

Another 500 spots will be open for a half-iron triathlon.

"It's huge for Wilmington," said Eric Vierling, a local triathlete training for his first iron-distance race this fall in Florida. "It's going to make people who never thought of doing an Ironman decide to do one."

While the appeal of such a punishing feat of endurance will be lost on many, Vierling said it's a way to test your limits. And there's a lot like him. He had to sit at his computer the day admissions opened for the Florida race to make sure he got in.

"It's to the point that for most Ironman races in the U.S., if you want to do them, you have got to sign up a year in advance," he said.

Scott said the race will be a major financial transfusion for the local economy, with participants likely to come from every state in the country for stays of several days, he said. There are only about 15 similar races in the country, none closer than Maryland, and participants don't just roll in the day before.

"If we have 1,000 people, you can just bank on 950 of them will be coming from out of town," Scott said.

From 2001 to 2005, Scott organized a similar race in Raleigh, but it was only mildly successful, he said. The difference is that Wilmington is a choice location and will attract many racers looking to combine the event with a vacation.

That's the reason the much shorter Wilmington YMCA Triathlon in September attracts 1,200 participants each year, the biggest race from Florida to Washington D.C., Scott said.