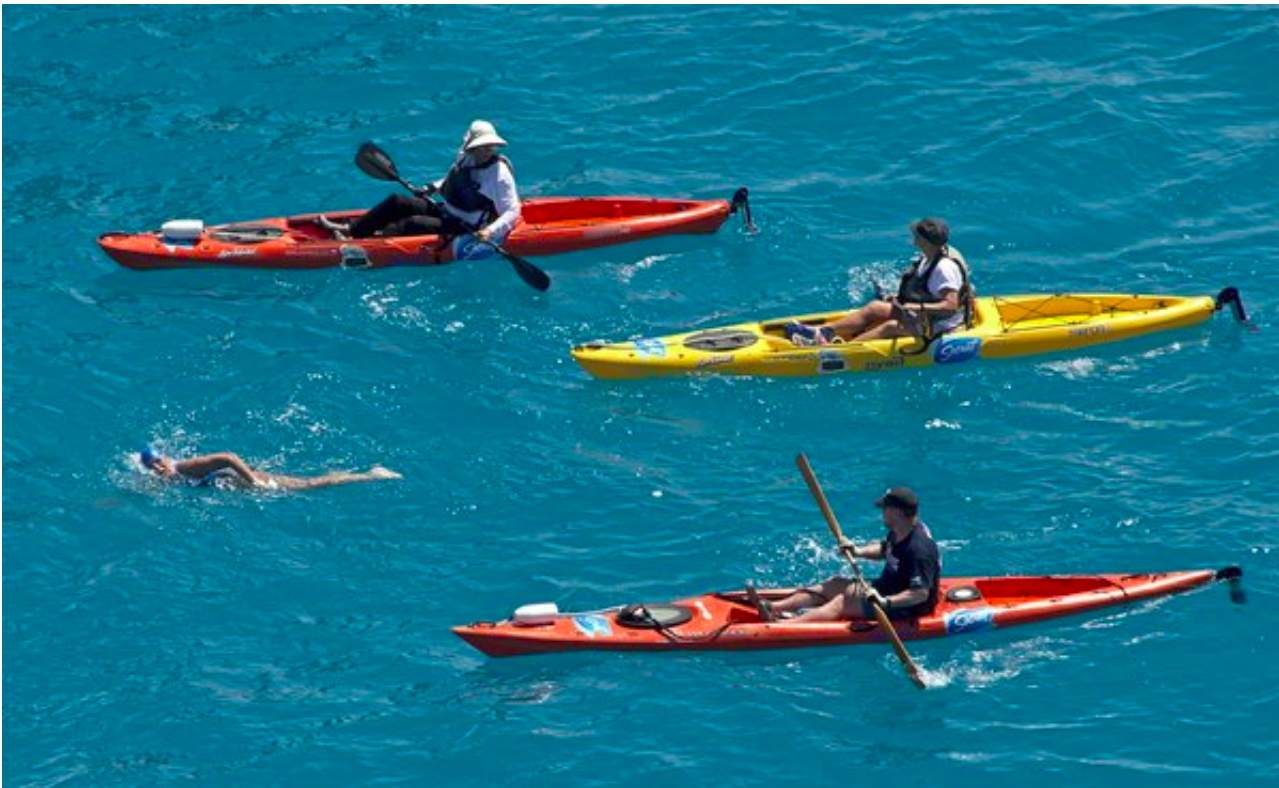


Sharks and Nature Cooperate for Solo Cuba-to-Florida Swim

By Lizette Alvarez

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Miami - This time, nature tipped its hat, and Diana Nyad finally conquered the 110-mile passage from Cuba to Florida that had bedeviled her for 35 years. Sharks steered clear, currents were friendly, and storms took most of the Labor Day weekend off.



Diana Nyad completes Cuba to Florida swim

The 64-year-old endurance swimmer emerged dazed and sunburned from the surf on Smathers Beach in Key West, Fla., just before 2 p.m. on Monday after nearly 53 hours in the ocean, a two-day, two-night swim from her starting point in Havana. She had survived the treacherous Florida Straits, a notorious stretch of water brimming with sharks, jellyfish, squalls and an unpredictable Gulf Stream. And she became the first person to do so unaided by the protection of a shark cage.

It was her fifth attempt, coming after four years of grueling training, precision planning and single-minded determination. Her face scorched and puffy from so many hours in the salt water, she leaned on one of her friends and said from the beach:

“I have three messages. One is we should never, ever give up. Two is you never are too old to chase your dreams. Three is it looks like a solitary sport, but it takes a team.”

Coming at an age when few people try to set endurance records, Ms. Nyad's swim lit up Twitter and Facebook with postings about perseverance and grit, including a tweet from President Obama:

“Congratulations to Diana Nyad. Never give up on your dreams.”

