

BUZZ

Edited by Will Boye

Diving for Dollars

A Charlotte entrepreneur brings a stylish new twist to the scuba world

DURING A DIVING TRIP IN COZUMEL LAST YEAR, SUSAN Martin noticed that certain members of her party were distracted. One diver spent endless minutes adjusting and readjusting her shoulder-length hair to keep it out of her face. ("The whole dive she was doing nothing but messing with her hair," Martin says.) Another used a cotton do rag to keep things in place, but the woman complained that, because it dried slowly, the rag wasn't ideal.

When she got back to Charlotte, Martin whipped up a few "Scuba Do Rags"—do rags made of fast-drying

spandex, in a variety of colorful patterns to identify divers. On her next trip to Cozumel, she invited a group of scuba heads to test dive her product and proceeded to hold her breath. But the group gave Martin glowing reviews, and in January she began selling the headgear from her Web site (www.scubadorag.com). By August, she had sold more than 300.

Martin has found a gender-neutral market for the Scuba



Since she started production on the Scuba Do Rag, Martin has found herself ordering yards of fabric to create ZowieMaui (left) and others.



Do Rags: In addition to "taming the mane," as she puts it, the hats make surfacing divers more visible to boats and protect their scalps from the sun. Endorsements this fall from magazines such as *SportDiver*, *SkinDiver*, *Diver*, and *Boating* have resulted in a flurry of orders from customers who waver between patterns such as ZowieMaui and CamoCoCo. "My wife says it makes me look like Willie Nelson," writes one diver from Texas who chose to exchange his Camo Rag, "and I just can't have that."

Martin is now seeking a financial partner to expand her budding business, and with a market of 8.5 million certified scuba divers in the United States alone, she says she'd be happy to place her \$35 headgear on just 10 percent of them. It's all been a pleasant surprise to Martin. "I just had no idea what was going to surface for me, no pun intended." —WB

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