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Searchers find body in Licking

By Shelly Whitehead, Post staff reporter

The body of a man who tried to swim across the Licking River to Newport on Monday was found about 5 a.m. today.

Search teams had combed the muddy waters under the Fourth Street Bridge after three companions said a man had slid down the steep bank on the Covington side of the Licking and then couldn't climb back up again.

Police were releasing no details this morning.

The man's three companions said last night that he had been drinking heavily before he went into the river.

The three men, who said they live on the Covington river banks, told emergency workers they were sitting with the man on the river bank downstream from the bridge just before he went into the water.

"I met him right there on the banks," said 39-year-old Christopher Gregg. "He got in and started swimming across that river. He'd polished off a bottle of vodka before that I know.

"But he went down and when you see somebody go down - I had to go in. But it pulled me down."

Gregg and his friends said they were forced to return to shore to save themselves, but called for help from a rowing crew headed upstream.

Three members of the Cincinnati Rowing Club said they had little to go on since the man had disappeared in a section of river that runs about 28 feet deep.

"We jumped out of the boat to help them look for him and I did a few depths to feel around to search but got nothing," said Rowing Club member John Shew, 19, of Clinton, Ind. "So we yelled to the people on the dock to get help."

Boats from Dayton, Ky., Cincinnati, Newport and Campbell County fire and rescue teams were used in the search. The Hamilton County Sheriff's Department sent a helicopter to scan the water from the air.

However, most of the searching in the Licking River's depths fell to the sensitive noses of the Campbell County Water Rescue team's cadaver dogs, which are able to detect gases associated with human bodies even when they are submerged in water.



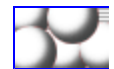
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Anyone having information about the identity of the man should call (859) 292-2222 or (859) 292-3622.

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