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NOW BRITAIN FACES ARCTIC BLAST

After the floods, snow and big freeze on way

STORM-battered Britain is
to freeze as an Arctic
blast brings snow and sub-
zero temperatures.

biting winds and frost will
signal the start of "proper
winter weather".

Thermometers are expected to
plunge through the rest of this
week and forecasters are warning
of a major freeze following the
storm.

James Madden, forecaster for
the Met Weather, warned Britons

By **Nathan Rao**

to brace for a "shock to the
system" as the cold sets in.

Snow is expected in northern
and eastern England, and heavy
falls could bring "blizzard condi-
tions" to the Scottish Highlands.

Today widespread downpours
threaten further misery for flood-
hit regions where the clean-up
from Storm Frank continues.

The Met Office has issued severe
weather alerts for Scotland with

TURN TO PAGE 7



Prince George wraps up for first day at nursery school

SEE PAGE 3

By Jane Warren

BRITAIN has a new endurance hero. In 1984, six-year-old Adam Walker earned a certificate for swimming one width of his school pool. Last year – 31 years later – he became the first British man to complete the Ocean's Seven challenge, which saw him swim non-stop across the world's seven toughest open-water swims wearing only trunks, cap and goggles.

The triumph of the former kettle and toaster salesman from Nottingham is a world away from the sanitised chlorinated swims of Olympic pool swimming. It saw self-taught, self-funded Adam, 37, powering through ice-cold currents for hours at a time during which he could only take a few sips of water every half an hour from a bottle thrown by his support boat.

The most extreme test was a 37-mile swim across the notorious Molokai Straits between two Hawaiian islands. The swim took 17 hours. Had Adam stopped moving for more than 10-15 seconds at a time he could have died of hypothermia or been swept further away by powerful currents that already added 12 miles to the route.

The Ocean's Seven features huge swells, treacherous currents and potentially deadly marine life. During the challenge, he was lacerated by a Portuguese man o' war jellyfish in Hawaii but kept on swimming, hoping the sting – which has scarred his torso for life – would not shut down his organs. Swimming between New Zealand's North and South Islands, he was circled by great white sharks and kept safe by a pod of dolphins, and he vomited on nearly every swim because of the extreme exertion involved and the relentless swell of the waves.

The immense physical endeavour required to cope with the near freezing temperatures saw him burn off a week's calories on each crossing. Much of the effort required was also psychological.

"Ocean swimming is about taking on the elements," says Adam who has written an inspiring book about his odyssey. "It is not a still body of water. The ocean can have its way. All I had to do was keep it simple in my mind: just one arm in front of the other. At some point the tide or current will change and give up, but I know I won't."

WHEN Adam swam the Cook Strait that links New Zealand's North and South Islands it was in water measuring just 14C in which he was immersed for more than eight hours, the coldest conditions in which anyone has ever achieved the crossing. His swim from Ireland to Scotland was similarly cold. Remarkable when you consider that swimming pools are generally kept at a steady 29C. Any drop in temperature below 26C and they are closed to the public.

"If you fill a bath from the cold tap, it will be around 18C, two degrees warmer than the English Channel. This sport is always uncomfortable, you are always on the edge of hypothermia and constantly have to visualise that you are warm – you burn more calories in cold water swimming than cycling and running combined."

Adam burned a whopping 19,000 calories on the longest of his swims in the open ocean. "You can't stop because you have to produce heat constantly and if you strongly believe in what you are doing you can tolerate more extremes."

Although the distances may be similar, ocean swimming is not comparable to running a marathon in other regards. "With a marathon you know how far you have to go, but that constantly changes with

I SWAM ALL SEVEN OCEANS...NON-STOP

Adam Walker is the first ever Briton to complete a remarkable challenge – thanks to dolphins who protected him from great white sharks



PICTURE: JOHN BLAKE

ocean swimming because of unpredictable weather or currents."

Three times as many people have climbed Mount Everest as have swum the English Channel – only six people in the world have ever completed the Ocean's Seven. Adam is one of only two ever to have done so without any failed attempts. He was the first to swim the two-way Gibraltar Strait from Europe to Africa and back without stopping, a 20-mile feat that took him 9 hours and 39 minutes in extreme currents. In the process he broke the British record one way.

In Australia, Japan and New Zealand Adam is a celebrity for the sheer audacity of his achievement. In Hawaii he is often on television because of his remarkable achievements. But when he swam from Ireland to Scotland last August there was little fanfare despite the 10 hours and 45 minutes he spent powering through the Irish Sea to complete the challenge while being

stung by lion's mane jellyfish which have tentacles of more than 120ft.

So what is the motivation? "There is something amazing about being in open water and at one with nature. As humans we try to make everything work for us, but you can't conquer the ocean and make it more hospitable. It is not sanitised and safe. Open water takes you into the unknown and it proves that anything is possible if you put your mind to it," he says.

Adam was no star child swimmer. In fact, it was only after seeing a film, *On A Clear Day*, during a flight to Australia in 2006 that he was inspired to try to swim the Channel. In an unhappy marriage and in a sales job he disliked, he had been searching for a challenge and in that moment he found it. "I always hated long distance and I hated front crawl, so this was the ultimate challenge for me."

Unfortunately, he discovered on his first swim across the English

Channel that his body couldn't cope with endurance swimming because of old sporting injuries.

He ruptured his bicep and was told never to swim again by specialists. His surgeon was horrified when Adam announced he was intending to swim from Europe to Africa within the year. But his old technique, swimming flat on his chest, was no longer possible because of permanent damage that has left two tendons fused together.

HE RESPONDED to this by developing a new swimming stroke based on the way dolphins swim, which he now teaches on swimming courses globally. "I can't sleep on my left side but using this stroke I can swim for 17 hours at a stretch," explains Adam. Film of him swimming with dolphins in New Zealand during his

quest has received more than five million hits on YouTube. "After my anti-shark device broke down they accompanied me for an hour and may have saved my life," he says.

The experience has clearly changed Adam in many ways. For one thing, he no longer sells electrical goods. "The first time I swam in open water at 9C for 45 minutes I nearly died. Now I can swim for more than four hours at the same temperature. We don't just have to play computer games and do what's conventional," he insists.

● To order *Man Vs Ocean* by Adam Walker (John Blake, £17.99), call the Express Bookshop on 01872 362 310 with your credit/debit card or send a cheque to The Express Bookshop to: *Man Vs Ocean Offer*, PO Box 200, Falmouth, Cornwall TR11 4WJ or visit expressbookshop.co.uk. UK delivery is free. ● For more information see oceankwalkeruk.com

CURRENT AFFAIRS: Adam had to develop a new stroke in order to complete his amazing swim