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# EU rivals turn up heat on Cameron

Gove expected to back Brexit after Brussels epic

Francis Elliott Political Editor  
Bruno Waterfield, David Charter  
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David Cameron may be forced to open his campaign to keep Britain in the EU on a weakened reform deal and without the backing of a senior cabinet minister.

The prime minister has been locked in a second night of gruelling summit talks but his circle believes that Michael Gove, the justice secretary, will support Brexit when negotiations with 27 other leaders finish.

Mr Cameron was caught in a diplomatic pincer movement as France, the leading opponent of safeguards for the City of London, joined an alliance of eastern and central European countries, led by Poland, in resisting cuts to migrant benefits. Diplomats from that group branded Mr Cameron "arrogant" for believing that his demands for reform would be met.

The increasingly bitter wrangling forced the prime minister to postpone a planned cabinet meeting in London last night and delay the start of the referendum campaign.

He was said to be resigned to losing the support of Mr Gove, although the justice secretary's aides said he believed that it would be "premature" to decide to back Brexit before the deal is struck.

"Like the prime minister he has ruled nothing out," an aide said. Mr Gove and other cabinet ministers are expected to make their positions clear after the meeting that Mr Cameron has promised to hold immediately after any deal. If it takes place today it will be the first cabinet meeting on a Saturday since April 3, 1982, after the invasion of the Falklands by Argentina.

A decision by Mr Gove to support Brexit would heap pressure on Boris Johnson. It is understood that Mr Cameron has not yet improved his offer to beef up a sovereignty package that has so far been judged insufficient by the London mayor.

The prime minister had initially hoped to conclude the talks yesterday but the mood darkened as a "British breakfast" to sign off the deal became first a lunch and finally a dinner. British officials admitted last night that a series of rows had yet to be resolved.

Alexis Tsipras, the Greek prime minister, had sent the process into further disarray during the afternoon by warning that, unless other countries promised not to close their borders to refugees crossing his nation, he would refuse to sign up to the agreement.

President Hollande knifed Mr Cameron by dismissing an impassioned

Continued on page 2, col 3



Tax avoider Charlie Mullins, owner of the Pimlico Plumbers and a Tory donor, has not paid millions of pounds in national insurance on his workers' wages. Pages 6-7

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News, page 15, Obituary, pages 76-77



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## 6 Body + Soul

# The man who swam 7 oceans (in just his trunks)

Adam Walker faced freezing water and deadly jellyfish to fulfil a life-changing goal, says Peta Bee

Adam Walker is sipping a coconut water and blueberry smoothie in the plush surroundings of a Chelsea health club when he hauls his 6ft 5in frame off the sofa, pulls up his T-shirt and shows me the scars on his torso. What look like faint slash marks crisscrossing his midriff are, in fact, the lacerations caused by the tentacles of a deadly Portuguese man o' war jellyfish. Walker, 37, was stung while swimming across the Molokai Channel in Hawaii, midway through his attempt to become the first British person to swim across the seven most treacherous channels in the world. As scars go, they are impressive, a reminder of the ordeal that saw him transform himself from toaster salesman to fully fledged adventurer over a remarkable six years.

Walker, from Nottingham, was a county-level swimmer and cricket player in his youth, but let sporting ambitions slip as age, injury and a humdrum career took hold. By his mid-twenties, he was, as he puts it, a "hobbling wreck", suffering a bad back, severe shoulder pain that required surgery and enduring two physio sessions a week. "I was unhappy in my job and felt a lot of discontentment with my life."

That was to change on a flight to Australia in 2006 when he watched a film called *On a Clear Day*, a fictional story about a Glaswegian shipbuilder who is laid off work and finds purpose after he decides to swim the English Channel. Married at the time (he divorced several years later), Walker turned to his wife and told her he was going to do the same. "It really was a lightbulb moment. My 30th birthday was looming. I was working 50-hour weeks in Manchester and I suddenly realised I had to swim the English Channel. My wife thought I was nuts."

It was a goal that consumed him, but the practicalities of achieving it were fraught with difficulty. "I hadn't been swimming seriously for about eight years. And my speciality had been backstroke — I had hated front crawl and despised long distances when I was competing."

With no coach or nutritionist for advice, he set about training for the 21-mile Channel swim, but his first attempt at an endurance session lasted only 45 minutes before he emerged from the water "rolling on to my side, coughing and spluttering". His first foray into outdoor waters was event-

ful, too: "It was February and the water was 9C. I managed 2km, then got out suffering from hypothermia. I couldn't remember where I was and was still hypothermic after a 45-minute lukewarm shower."

That experience taught him a lesson about the demands of open-water swimming and he continued his training with a new level of respect for the trial ahead. Eighteen months later Walker swam the Channel. It turned out to be only the beginning of an epic aqua-adventure that has taken the best part of a decade.

"The Channel swim had placed enormous strain on my shoulder and my surgeon discovered I had ruptured a bicep tendon," Walker says. "I had two operations and was advised not to swim but I had already started training to cross the Strait of Gibraltar and back, so I blocked it out."

To minimise further damage to his shoulder, he developed a unique swimming technique with less focus on arm-pulling. "I found I was using 1,200 strokes less per hour, yet getting faster."

He completed the Gibraltar swim in nine hours and 39 minutes, setting the British record for the route in one direction. It was afterwards that Walker heard about the Ocean's Seven challenge, a seven-leg swim across the world's hardest seas, two stages of which he had, unwittingly, already completed. It was to be no small undertaking. Each swim — the Catalina Channel; the Cook Strait in New Zealand; the Tsugaru Strait in Japan; the Strait of Gibraltar; the Molokai Channel in Hawaii; and the frigid North Channel between Scotland and Northern Ireland — would take upwards of eight hours, often in treacherous waters inhabited by sharks, whales and deadly marine life.

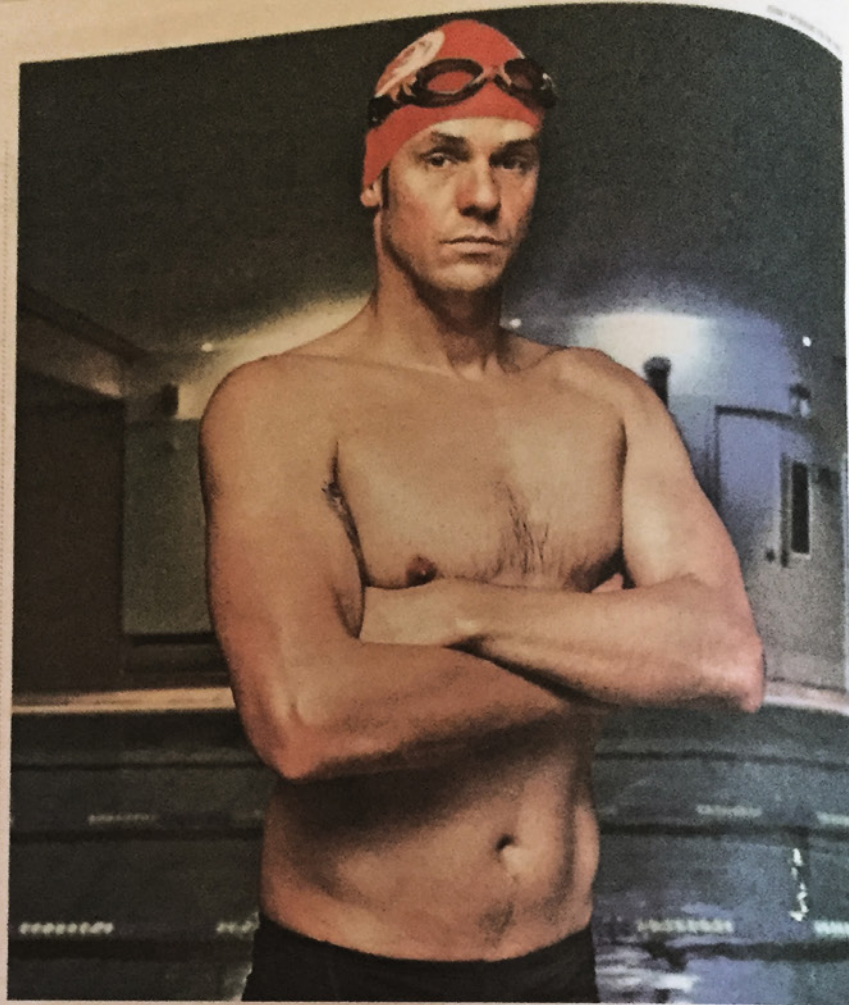
To add to the difficulty, the rules ban swimmers from wearing anything buoyant or insulating, despite the sometimes freezing temperatures. "It's a pair of basic trunks, goggles and a silicon hat." A

support boat with pilot is allowed, but swimmers are not permitted to touch it. And while there is no time limit — you can take 20 years to complete all seven oceans — each of the swims must be done nonstop. Walker had it in mind to become the first Briton to complete the challenge.

It was in Hawaii, where the water was comparatively balmy, that he had his closest brushes with death.

"I was swimming, more worried about sharks than anything as the shark sonar I wore around my ankle had packed in after eight hours," he explains.

"Then I was hit by something and I was on fire. I had a 15-inch scar down my leg and tentacles embedded in my stomach. I didn't want to show I was in pain in case the support boat's pilot insisted I stop. But those things have 75 per cent of the toxins of cobra snakes. They can kill you."



Adam Walker

## The Ocean's Seven

English Channel  
11hr 35min

Strait of Gibraltar  
(both ways)  
9hr 39min

Molokai Channel,  
Hawaii  
17hr 2 min

Catalina Channel  
12hr 15min

Tsugaru Strait  
15hr 31min

Cook Strait  
8hr 39min

North Channel  
10hr 45min

Man vs Ocean by  
Adam Walker is out  
now (John Blake  
Publishing, £17.99),  
oceanwalkeruk.com

Antihistamine tablets attached to a rope were thrown into the water, but Walker vomited for eight minutes after taking them. "There's a risk that the venom attacks your nervous system and at one point my spine went numb. Something within me allowed me to crawl on for three-and-a-half hours. I emerged from the water with 30 ulcers in my mouth and blood coming out of my leg. I could barely breathe. It was my lowest point."

On most swims he endures motion sickness due to the turbulence of the waves. "You can't stop to be sick because the water temperature was so cold. So you develop a method of being sick as you swim." In later swims, he nourished himself in the water with chicken soup made by his girlfriend.

It was the loneliness of the endeavour that was possibly hardest. "During the fifth swim, my marriage was coming to an end and I was struggling with things emotionally. Your mind plays games with you and there's a mental battle with the ocean. Sometimes you are swimming at night and can't see anything but blackness."

There's a support boat — containing in the latter stages, his new girlfriend, Gemma — but it's out of bounds. "Your only human interaction is the eye contact that comes when your drink or food is thrown to you, and you come to live for that."

In all, his challenge lasted seven years, ending when he completed the last Channel and became the first British person to finish the Ocean's Seven. Walker says he has learnt more than he could have anticipated by being exposed to the vulnerability that comes with such extremes. "Fear I had before are non-existent now."

Now he is teaching his technique, dubbed the Ocean Walker approach, at pools around the country. As for future challenges, he's already thinking big. "There are glaciers melting and I wonder if, by immersing myself in their waters, I could draw attention to them."