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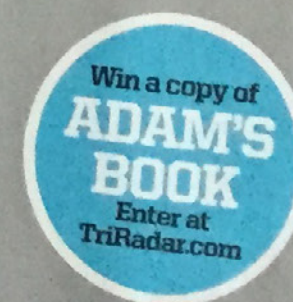
OCEAN WALKING

Adam Walker is one of a kind; the only man from the UK to have completed the Ocean's Seven - a transcontinental swimming challenge that saw him complete the seven toughest channel swims in the world

Words: Ashley Quinlan

It's been a long journey for 37-year-old Adam Walker in more ways than one. He's dealt with serious injuries to both knees, his shoulder and bicep, yet still succeeded on his first attempt

to complete the Ocean's Seven challenge where only one other had before. Now a motivational speaker and coach alongside his swimming exploits, Adam tells us his story and the genesis of his pioneering "Ocean Walker" swim stroke.



It's funny," says Adam, reminiscing about his youthful dreams to be a professional athlete. "In my mind growing up I wanted to be one, but with all the injuries I thought I was just going to go down in history as one of those people who say, 'I could've been this, I could've done that'."

"I really didn't want to be that guy, and then I saw this film called *On a Clear Day* about a channel swimmer, and it got me thinking – I wonder if I could do that?" *On a Clear Day* depicts a fictional character who loses his job, then looking for inspiration, decides to swim the English Channel.

"I just thought this was it; it was what I wanted to do to set a few markers for my life," says Adam.

However simple Adam makes it sound, he still had to overcome his injuries and lack of open water experience.

BIG LESSONS

"The first time I went swimming after I'd decided to take on these challenges I only managed to stay in the water for 45 minutes. Then, on my first visit to an open-water lake I managed around 2km in 9 degrees and ended up being pulled from the water with hypothermia – not knowing who or where I was," he recalls.

"It was a big lesson, and I might've been forgiven for giving it up there and then, but I thought, 'no, if I'm stupid enough to do my first open-water swim in February then I'd better learn from it and do it properly!'"

Doing it properly meant travelling to Dover in the summer to train in the sea on his weekends while he held down a full-time job selling homeware in Nottinghamshire. His remarkable progress is testament to his commitment: "I had to drive three-and-a-half hours to get to Dover, swim six hours, then stay overnight, swim another five hours the next day, then drive home again."

"It was tough, but my progress from hypothermia to six-hour training sessions gave me the confidence that I could do the whole channel swim."

DEALING WITH THE PAIN

In 2008, Adam completed his goal of swimming the channel in 11:35 hours, despite an emerging shoulder problem. It limited the amount of training he could do so Adam added regular trips to a physio and local hypnotherapist to help him block out the pain. He had to tailor his training to suit his body, rather than train his body to suit his event.

Next, Adam set his sights on the Gibraltar Strait, but not before over a year of gym work as he tried to work out with doctors what was causing his

shoulder pain. In the end, it transpired that he had ruptured a bicep tendon, for which he had an operation. But Adam knew he had to do something else to relieve the strain on his body and keep his dreams alive.

"I was all arms, brute strength and power. But I started to take a different view when I looked at rotation in the swim. Most coaches that I came across taught how to rotate the shoulders and chest first, but I looked at other sports like boxing, shotput, kayaking and even running, which are all powered from the core," he says. "So, why don't we do what we do on land, in the water? It didn't make sense to me."

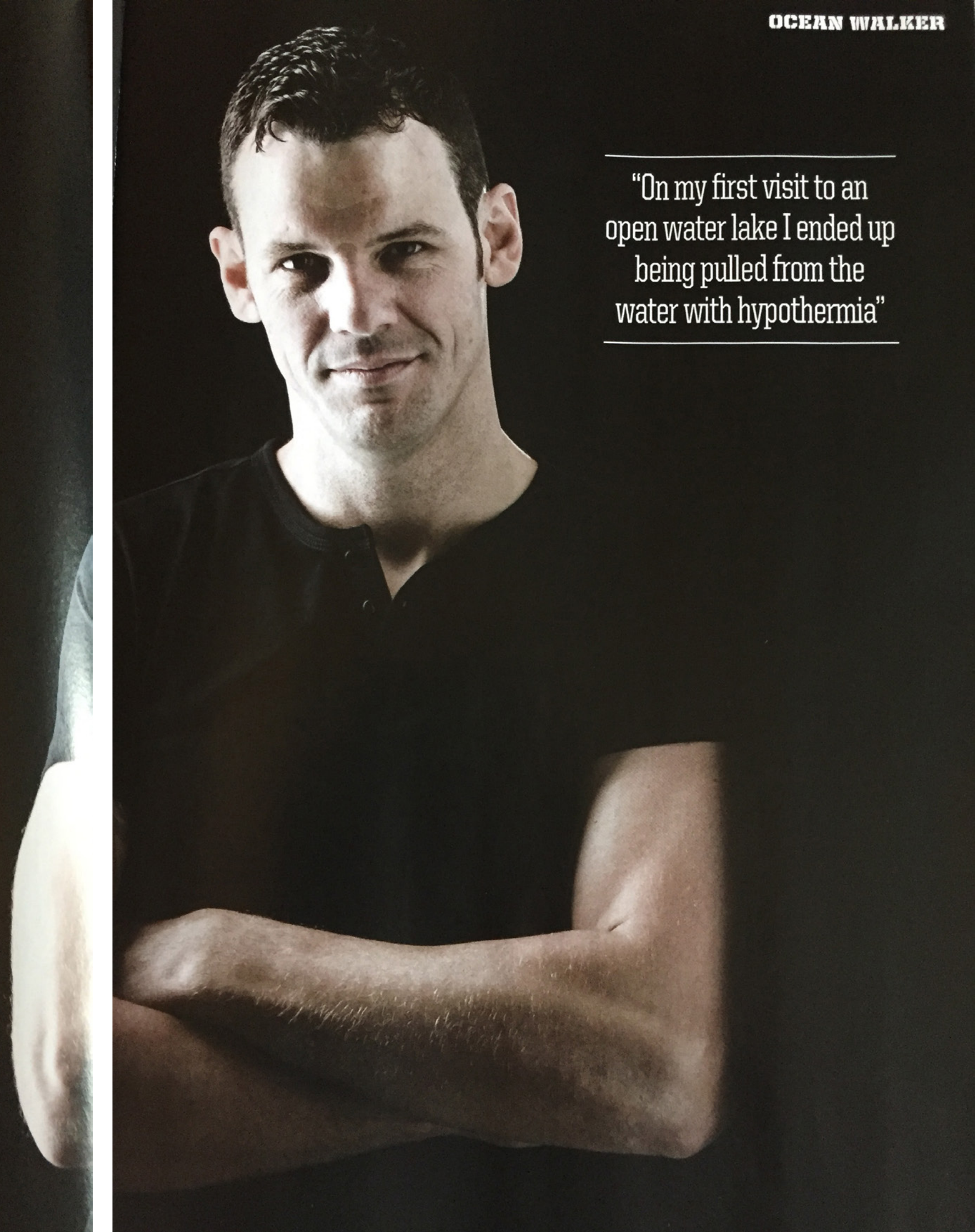
"So I looked at different ways that I could use my hips as the starting point of the rotation [rather than the upper body]. It meant I could use the core and hips to activate the stroke, and I found that each time I did this, I'd shoot forward with each stroke," Adam says. "The benefits were obvious when I swam in a static pool next to another guy, who was arguably stronger than me in the pool. We both swam at 1:20/100m pace, yet I was doing one stroke to his two."

Bolstered with new confidence, Adam went on to swim the Gibraltar Strait both ways and beat the British record for the first, single crossing. He continued on to complete the full Ocean's Seven challenge and now coaches endurance swimmers and triathletes. In the following pages Adam explains how you can train to use his unique "Ocean Walker" stroke. To read more about Adam's inspiring story, pick up his book *'Man Vs Ocean'*, (John Blake Publishing, £17.99) from all good bookstores. To take full advantage of Adam's coaching expertise, visit oceanwalkeruk.com

ADAM'S SWIM ACHIEVEMENTS

- British record from Spain to Morocco
- First British person to swim from Spain to Morocco and back
- 2010 male winner in the Two Way Windermere swim
- First British person to cross 26 mile Molokai Straits in Hawaii
- First British person to swim the 16 mile Tsugaru Strait in Japan
- First British person to complete seven toughest ocean swims in the world

"On my first visit to an open water lake I ended up being pulled from the water with hypothermia"



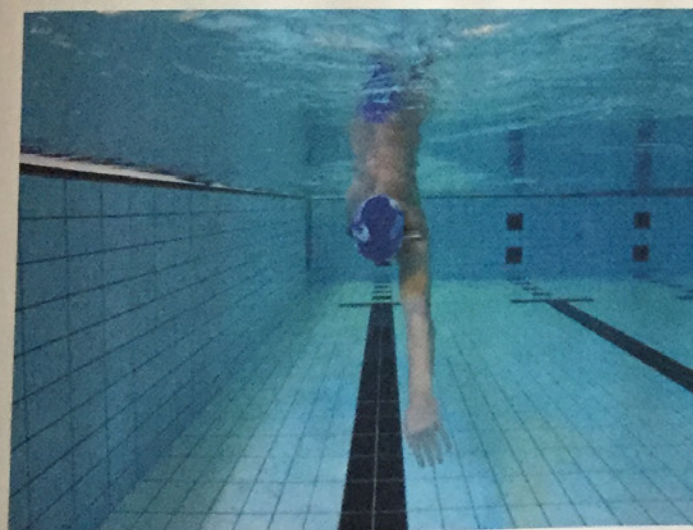
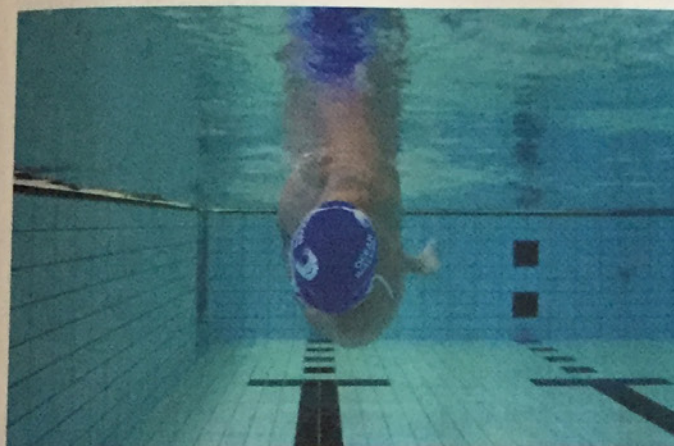
DO IT LIKE ADAM

The Ocean Walker stroke relies on your core to power the rotation of the body, rather than the shoulders and chest. Here's how to boost your stroke

RELIEVE SHOULDER AND NECK STRESS

Use the lower half of your body to power your stroke, this means it's not necessary to use your shoulders and chest muscles to dominate your movement.

ADAM'S TIP: Try turning your feet out and tipping your top oblique down to start the rotation.



GAIN POWER

Because of the 90 degree rotation from side to side, less surface area is going through the water as you are never flat. That means you get less drag, increasing your speed. The rotation from the core creates a corkscrew powered motion generating more power as you are not pulling your whole torso through the water with your arms and shoulders.

ADAM'S TIP: When rotating from side to side, concentrate on keeping your head still as this acts as your rudder.

SAVE ENERGY

As a result of the powered glide and momentum that's created from the corkscrew rotation, it means fewer strokes are required. Adam now does up to 1,200 strokes less per hour than he used to, and is faster at the same time. This also saves energy, preserving your reserves for bike and run.

ADAM'S TIP: Hold your extended arm right to the last second before rotation takes place. Let the other arm pass the already extended arm before pulling back.



INJURY PREVENTION

Using muscles that are within the natural mechanics and patterns of the body, means the likelihood of injury is significantly reduced. Simply pushing your elbow around rather than over the top of your head keeps your shoulder free from compression. In addition, it reduces strain on tendons, the cause of Adam's original struggles.

ADAM'S TIP: Try to push your elbow around in a circular fashion, rather than winding high overhead, which potentially irritates your shoulder joint.

The principle of Adam's stroke and the key to fast swimming, is timing and relaxation, which saves you energy and effort. Try out these tips on their own first to build your confidence and efficiency, slowly integrating them for smooth and efficient swimming.

DEVELOP YOUR CORE STRENGTH

Use the gym for real fitness gains.

As Adam uses his core to power his stroke, it is vital he develops his core strength in the gym, as well as swim great distances in training. Here are his top exercise picks



FRONT PLANK

Raise yourself from a prone position onto your elbows, which are beneath your shoulders. Keep your body straight and tight as you engage your abdominals to hold you steady. Hold for 60 seconds.



SIDE PLANK

On your side, resting on your elbow and forearm, raise your hips so you keep a straight line between your head and feet. Keep your core engaged to maintain your steadiness. Hold for 60 seconds each side.



SCISSORS

A staple of lower core training, but it's simulation of the kick is particularly useful. Lie on your back, legs raised with your lower back pressed into the ground. Then, flutter your feet from your hips in a freestyle kick motion. Maintain for 30 seconds.



DUMB BELL LIFTS

Assume a press up position with small dumb bells in your hands. Turn to the side while keeping your core engaged, and raise the upper dumb bell above your head. Return to the start steadily and repeat on the other side. Repeat 8 times each side.

LEG RAISES

With the small of your back pressed into the ground, raise your legs together until you reach 90 degrees. Lower back to the start. Use a block to support your head. Complete 12 reps.

SIDE-TO-SIDES

Sit in a V position and grasp a medicine ball in front of you. Twist from the core side to side, touching the medicine ball to the ground each time. Keep looking forward, and also try to keep your feet steady throughout. Touch the ball down 12 times on each side.