

HYPNOTHERAPY



On the rocks: the swimmers and supporters celebrate their arrival on the African continent

Straits swimmers have killer whale of a time

A TRIO of students have broken the British record for swimming the Straits of Gibraltar unaided – despite the close attentions of a pod of killer whales.

Oxford University students **Lennard Lee**, **Harry Fisher** and **Nicholas Berry** were followed by the whales during the last half-hour of the 22km swim.

The swimmers have not said whether this was a help or a hindrance but their time of 3hr 38min suggests it may have helped them to swim a little faster!

The time was almost an hour less than that recorded by Little Britain star David Walliams and Olympic rowing gold medallist James Cracknell earlier this year.

Fisher, a former Portsmouth Northsea swimmer, said: 'The killer whales were the scariest thing. I saw them behind the support boat in the last half-hour of the swim. I could see them circling us and getting closer and closer. Our support boat had to make a barrier between them and us.'

Lee, who swam for Stockport Metro, said: 'This was the toughest challenge that each of us had set ourselves and we are over the moon to have

successfully undertaken such a contest.'

Berry added: 'We're ecstatic. Despite the cold and huge waves, we pushed through the pain barrier.'

The students, who were backed by Gibraltar-based Close and Marrache Ltd, have raised at least £1600

for the Variety Club children's charity.

JAWS FEAR OVERCOME

Former Suffolk county record holder **Mark Ransom** used hypnosis to overcome a lifelong fear of sharks before successfully swimming the English Channel.

The 38-year-old paramedic has been terrified of sharks since a huge basking shark brushed against his legs while he was swimming in the sea as a 14-year-old. His fear was so strong that, despite being a county champion, he refused to swim out of his depth in the sea.

But now he has overcome his terror at the prospect of seeing another shark to swim the 26 miles from Samphire Hoe, near Dover, to Wissant in France in 12hr 23min 10sec.

Mark, of Bury St Edmunds, revealed details of his treatment and his training for the event in his blog on healthy active living website realbuzz.com.

'If I can overcome my fear of sharks, anyone can overcome obstacles and achieve their goals,' he said. 'The hypnotherapy gradually changed my mental attitude so that I saw my fear as something which was ridiculous. The therapy also helped me deal with the cold during the swim.'

Mark, who was inspired by Channel swimmer Mike Read and David Walliams, raised money for East Anglia Children's Hospices.

McCall 15th in Euro 5km

BRITAIN'S **Alice McCall** and **Charlotte Wooliscroft** came 15th and 16th as the first 16 swimmers came home within 75 seconds of each other in open water's 5km European Junior Championships at Sete, France.

France's **Amelie Muller** retained her title in 1hr 4min 39.00sec with McCall recording 1:05:53.21, Wooliscroft 1:05:54.06 and the third Briton, **Aynsley Heseltine**, 1:09:04.72 for 22nd place.

In the men's event, Britain's **Alistair Brown** was 16th in 1:02:35.92, **Stephen Waterhouse** 18th in 1:02:43.16 and **Allan Lindberg** 24th in 1:03:19.30. Job Kienhuis of the Netherlands took the gold in 1:00.28.01.

Death of ex-synchro sec

MARY Rushby, a leading figure in British synchro until about ten years ago, has died at a care home in Halifax aged 78.

Her involvement with swimming dated back at least to 1956 when she helped her first husband, John Slater, to found the British Long Distance Swimming Association.

She coached at Halifax SC from about 1967-77, taught at Kirklees and Calderdale swim schools and judged at national swimming championships.

She went on to specialise in synchro, coaching to international level, serving as secretary of the asa synchro committee for many years and judging for LEN and FINA at many international competitions. She received the Mary Black Award for services to synchro in 1998.

She leaves a husband, Derek Rushby, a daughter, Alison Slater, and a granddaughter.

Hardy tests positive

US breaststroke star Jessica Hardy's participation in the Olympics was in serious doubt after she tested positive for the banned substance Clenbuterol after the American trials.

Hardy, who won the 50 and 100m breaststroke at the World Short Course Championships in Manchester in April, vehemently protested her innocence.

She was due to swim the 100m breaststroke, 50m freestyle and 4x100m freestyle relay in Beijing.

Ponds Forge unveils flagship gym



Sheffield's (l-r) Paul Blomfield, Helen Broadbent and Steve Brailey try out their new gym

VIP guests and Fitness Unlimited members turned out in force as Sheffield International Venues unveiled their new flagship gym at Ponds Forge.

The gym boasts 130 workout stations, a dedicated cycle-based 'spin' studio, kinesiology space and new fitness studios.

The major upgrade formed a large part of a £3m refurbishment that also included improvements to the leisure pool and its changing areas, completed in March.

Ponds Forge has been Britain's leading venue for national and international swimming and diving events since it was built for the World Student Games in Sheffield in 1991.

Steve Brailey, SIV's chief executive, said: 'This fantastic new facility strengthens our position as leaders in the health and fitness industry in Sheffield. The beneficiaries are our Fitness Unlimited members who now have access to the biggest and best gym in the area.'