

English Channel Butterfly World Record Swim - 5th August 2002

It's 7.30 am on 5th August 2002. I'm standing on the boat, greasing up for the venture of a lifetime, to achieve my dream to swim the English Channel - butterfly.

It wasn't failure, just an incomplete swim

As you may know, this dream was cut short in August 2000 when I had to abort my last attempt due to an arm injury, just 2 miles from the French coast. GUTTED is the word that springs to mind, but on reflection, I learnt so much from it. I never see it as 'failure' rather an 'incomplete' swim, as anyone who attempts the Channel has a special something about them. It takes guts, determination, motivation and a lot of positive mental attitude. I know - I have to have it.

So, 2 years on and here I am ready to go again. My arm is fully recovered thanks to a magnetic miracle (my 'jazz' bioflow) - a fantastic bracelet with a magnet, that sorted out my injury and enabled me to continue training on butterfly. What luck - I'd recommend them highly.

In the run up to 5th August, I'd had a tough time. My original tide dates for my swim

had been mid-July. Because of unfavourable conditions, I'd not even been able to make my attempt. It was very frustrating.

For those of you not familiar with Channel Swimming, swims usually take place on neap tides occurring at certain times in the month. The night before, you have to give the pilot (the guy in charge of the accompanying boat) a call. This is made following the Met forecast, as on this report the pilot either gives the go-ahead (or not, in my case) for the next day.

The stomach butterflies

Consequently, I had to return in August and await the tide and right conditions. Thankfully, on Sunday 4th August the word 'YES' rings through my ears. The swim is on. Food and bags to get ready and pack; stomach butterflies to contend with also! 6.00 am and the alarm goes. All systems go. Then follows a journey down to the docks at Folkestone to meet my boat *Viking Princess* - A short trip to Samphire Hoe, near Dover - the starting

point, on a lovely day along with my dad and the rest of the crew.

I got in the water and swam back to shore

So here I am ready to take the plunge after being greased up. In just my swimming costume, hat and goggles, I descend the boat's ladder, into the water - a temperature of about 58 - 60 degrees, (Compared to a pool of 84 degrees!). Splash...From the boat I swim back to shore! The timed swim starts from the beach, clear of the water, then I enter. What a moment. It's 8.02 am and I begin my first few strokes, the long way ahead, but finally, a chance to achieve my ambition. I was not going to be beaten this time.

What goes through my mind? A question asked many times - It's all about keeping a positive mental attitude and being determined to do it, overcoming any barriers in my path and BELIEVING IN

Samphire Hoe, Dover
The start of the swim



Leaving Dover
Flying all the way to France

