



| Julie Bradshaw |

SWIMMING ACROSS THE CHANNEL

Sono 34 chilometri di acque gelide, trafficate e solcate da correnti imprevedibili. Eppure ogni anno c'è gente che decide di attraversare la Manica a nuoto. Perché? L'abbiamo chiesto a una veterana di questa impresa. BY JULIAN EARWAKER | **B1** LOWER INTERMEDIATE

The water is cold, the tides¹ are strong, and this is one of the busiest canals in the world. Yet every year people come here from all over the world to try a unique challenge²: to swim the Channel. "It's the bit of water everyone wants to conquer," says long-distance champion Julie Bradshaw.

MADFISH

Bradshaw has 20 world records. Her most recent is the 46-kilometre swim around Manhattan in New York. It all started when she swam Lake Windermere – England's largest lake – at the age of just 13. In 1979, at the age of 15, she swam the Channel in 10 hours and 9 minutes, which remains a British junior³ record. She also holds the record for the fastest Channel crossing by butterfly stroke⁴, which is one of the most difficult swim techniques. Her nickname⁵ is Madfish. Does she become a different person when she enters the water?

ON LAND

It's ironic: Bradshaw now lives in the

Midlands town of Loughborough, which is about as far from the sea as you can get⁶ in England, but the university there is famous for sports and is the headquarters⁷ for Team GB Olympic preparations this summer. When she is not training for long hours in the university pool, Bradshaw is swimming in her back garden: she uses an "Endless Pool"⁸, in which she swims against an artificial current, a bit like a runner's treadmill⁹.

IF YOU'RE SERIOUS...

Most Channel swims are organised by the Channel Swimming Association. Bradshaw is currently secretary. First of all, the British organisation wants swimmers to complete a supervised swim of six hours or more in water of 15°C or below. It also recommends pilot boats, which cost around £2,500, but are essential for navigate the tides and avoiding ships. "You don't need to see a boat," says Bradshaw. "You can hear their engines in the water. As the big boats go past you can see their waves coming towards you. It's like being a cork bobbing around in the water"¹⁰.

Dr. Julie Bradshaw in action. When she was 15 she broke the junior world record for swimming across the English Channel. So far she has broken 20 world records!

GLOSSARY

- 1 **tides:** correnti
- 2 **challenge:** sfida
- 3 **junior:** giovanile
- 4 **butterfly stroke:** farfalla (stile di nuoto)
- 5 **nickname:** soprannome
- 6 **as far from the sea as you can get:** nel punto più lontano dal mare
- 7 **headquarters:** quartier generale
- 8 **endless pool:** piscina infinita
- 9 **treadmill:** tapis roulant
- 10 **a cork bobbing around in the water:** un tappo di sughero che galleggia sull'acqua