

Sharks fail to deter marathon swimmer

By David Parker

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A SWIMMER has become the first Briton to cross a shark-infested Japanese channel.

Mr Adam Walker, 34, of Home Farm Close, Kelham, swam 19.7km across the Tsugaru channel that separates the two main islands of Japan.

He is hoping to become only the fifth person in the world to complete the Ocean's Seven challenge — a series of seven long distance swims scattered around the world.

Mr Walker, who began his challenge in 2008, has completed five so far — the Molokai Channel between two Hawaiian islands; the Catalina Channel between the island of Santa Catalina and California; the Strait of Gibraltar, the English Channel and the Tsugaru Channel.

Originally from Radcliffe, Mr Walker was a member of Bingham Swimming Club until his teens. He rediscovered his love for swimming in 2008 after deciding to swim the English Channel.

He crossed the Tsugaru Channel in 15hrs 31mins. He was the first Briton and only the 17th person in the world to do it.

He was told before the swim that the water was infested with sharks, but that no-one had ever been attacked.

"I started with a steady pace, keeping the nerves under control," said Mr Walker.

He was hit by a large wave 30 minutes into the swim, swallowed sea water and was sick.



LONG-DISTANCE swimmer Adam Walker

"Shortly after being sick, I got stung in the face by jellyfish," he said.

"I didn't see them, so I knew they must have been very small but they caused some discomfort."

For seven hours the current pushed Mr Walker sideways at a rate of about 2mph and he was forced to do 20-minute sprints to keep pace.

He then encountered 10ft waves.

"They took everything out of me and I've never breathed so hard in my life," he said.

"The crew began to get really worried as I was so tired."

When he saw land Mr Walker said he started to believe he could make it.

With just 1.5 miles to go, however, the current pushed him back a mile and then sideways for an hour.

When it got dark Mr Walker saw a 6ft shark swim underneath him and he began to swim towards the boat.

"The boat was around 50 metres away, so I shouted at them that I'd seen a shark and to come closer," he said.

"They didn't hear me so I sprinted towards the boat."

The current finally subsided and with 800 metres to go he headed for a lighthouse where he finished.

"It was the hardest thing I've ever done in my life," said Mr Walker.

"The boat pilot said I was the strongest swimmer he's ever seen, which was a massive compliment as there have been so many great swimmers who have taken this swim on."

Mr Walker has only the Cook Strait near New Zealand and the North Channel between Scotland and Northern Ireland to go to complete all seven swims.

His latest effort raised £3,000 for the Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society.

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