

## Real life

Julie Bradshaw is aiming to add to her 20 long-distance world records with another lung-busting challenge – swimming the Humber River using butterfly stroke. She chats to Becky Jones about her preparations and of the tragic death of her friend, fellow long-distance swimmer Susan Taylor

**D**OCTOR Julie Bradshaw has spent 10 minutes in the swimming pool, but she hasn't got anywhere. Considering she's planning to swim the 12-mile long River Humber this weekend, that seems rather worrying. However, the pool in question is an endless pool, which lets her swim against a broad, deep current while staying in the same spot, in the garden of her Loughborough semi.

And, importantly, this is a woman with 20 long-distance swimming world records to her name, so if anyone can conquer the Humber, it's "Madfish" Julie.

"The record I'm going for is to be the first person to swim the Humber on butterfly. It's been swum before but never on butterfly," says Julie, taking a seat in the lounge, her hair still damp from her dip.

The Humber swim was suggested by her friend, Pete Winchester, who is known as the King of the Humber, having swum the river 68 times over 35 years. Julie planned to attempt the record in 2011, but was thwarted after the support boat was vandalised and the wind became too strong.

Last year, the weather also hampered her efforts on three occasions, so she's hoping for good conditions this weekend. "When I spoke to Pete (who will be Julie's support boat captain) the other day, the water was only 50 degrees. We want to do it 100 per cent safely and, as it's going to be butterfly, it needs to be that little bit warmer."

"It's a strenuous stroke and it's a bit slower than freestyle, so it's a case of trying to keep warm. About 60 is a nice temperature in the water."

"You also need the right wind conditions. Anything above force three or four isn't swimmable in," says Julie,

# Different strokes



'OPEN WATER IS ALL ABOUT THE CHALLENGE': Long-distance swimmer Dr Julie Bradshaw training in the endless pool in her garden. PICTURE: ALEX HARRHAM

who always swims in a costume – relying on a good slathering of lanolin to provide insulation and minimise chafing – and never a wetsuit.

"That's not proper open-water swimming," she says emphatically. "Open water is all about the challenge – the cold water, being outside. You put a wetsuit on and it keeps you warm and it aids buoyancy, especially for guys who have a lower centre of gravity."

"I'm all for encouraging people, but open-water swimming is all about the challenge."

This is a woman who knows about challenges. Blackpool-born Julie got into long-distance swimming during family holidays in the Lake District and, at the age of 14, she swam the 10.5-mile length of Lake Windermere in four hours 38 minutes, setting a British junior record. That same year she set a junior record on Morecambe Bay.

Then, on August 19, 1979 – a date she says is engraved in her brain – 15-year-old Julie became the fastest British junior to swim the English Channel, in 10 hours 9 minutes. This record still stands.

"I look back now and think 'crickey'. At the time, I didn't realise what I'd done. It's only as I've got older that I've appreciated what I've achieved," reflects Julie, whose cosy lounge is filled with trophies, shields, certificates and

photos, reminders of her achievements. Julie's world record collection began in 1980, when she completed the Three Way Windermere in 20 hours, 17 minutes. Later that year, she did Three Lakes in One Day, swimming the lengths of Windermere, Ullswater and Conistone in 14 hours, 12 minutes, and the following year, she completed the 42-mile Four Way Windermere in 23 hours, 17 minutes.

In all three events, Julie became the first woman to complete them.

After graduating from Loughborough University with a BA in PE with sports science and history, an MSc in PE and a Postgraduate Certificate in Education, Julie taught in Leicestershire, then worked as a swimming coach in Canada for a year. Having swum front crawl previously, Julie tried swimming butterfly while she was in Canada and liked it so much she switched strokes.

"When I got back to England, I went to Windermere and swam the length of it. I became the first person to ever swim the lake 'by'."

After going on to set world records swimming the length of Conistone and Ullswater, and the Two-Way Conistone, Julie decided it would be "quite cool" to swim butterfly across the English Channel.

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So, 23 years after setting her junior record, Julie was back in those familiar waters. "I did it in 14 hours, 18 minutes. There was a Canadian lady who'd done it before and her record was 23 hours, 17 minutes, so I smashed it by nine hours."

Since then, Julie has set individual world records as the first person to swim butterfly in the Two-Way Lake Bala, Lough Erne, in Ireland, and the Triple Lake Taupo, New Zealand. In 2011, she became the fastest person to circumnavigate the 28.5-mile course around Manhattan Island using the butterfly stroke, in nine hours, 28 minutes.

She also set world records as part of relay teams, including the first ladies' relay team to complete the Triple English Channel and the Six-Way Windermere, and the first medley relay team to swim the English Channel.

Julie's most recent world record came in June when she was part of the first medley relay team to complete the Two-Way Windermere. This achievement has become all the more precious after the death of her friend and fellow long-distance swimmer, Susan Taylor, who was part of the four-person team. "Two weeks after that, she died swimming the Channel. It was quite a shock," says Julie, who'd been friends with

Susan for two years, after she contacted Julie about Channel swimming.

"I'm so pleased she did the relay with me. She was going to be part of all the other relays I've got planned."

Does such a tragedy make Julie more worried about the risks?

"No. You could walk across the road and get knocked down, but it wouldn't stop me crossing the road again. It's a risk and, as long as you've followed all the safety rules, you've got your support boat, you've done all the training and had a medical, there's nothing more you can do," says Julie.

"It just makes you aware it's physically challenging. We do push our bodies to the limits, but I'd prefer to go doing something I enjoy doing rather than get old and sit in an old people's home."

Through completing these challenges, Julie has not only achieved world records, she has also raised thousands of pounds for charities including Breakthrough Breast Cancer, Child Line and Rainbows children's hospice.

In recognition of her efforts, Julie was awarded an MBE for services to swimming and charity in the 2006 New Year's Honours List. She has also received an honorary doctorate from Loughborough University, was nominated for the Inspiration award at the Sunday Times Sportswomen of the

## Bark life

### How to nip this problem in the bud

**Q:** My Cockerpool has nipped both me and my brother and she is getting worse. She is only six months old and I am getting worried about her. Any advice please?

**A:** This is a regular problem with young dogs that have been given too much freedom too soon and have been played with too much and treated as a toy, rather than a dog, writes Steve Hawes.

These behaviours are more commonly found in smaller breeds of dog, as these tend to be more spoilt in terms of attention than bigger breeds.

The evidence of this is everywhere, from ranges of designer clothes for small dogs to the selective breeding for ever-smaller dogs. This is a growing industry, yet it is completely exploiting the owners and is damaging the dogs, because their basic needs as dogs have not changed just because they are small.

The advent of designer breeds that 10 years ago would have been called mongrels now command high prices and are not always well bred, which can add to the difficulty in living with them and teaching them how to behave.

All dogs have thresholds of tolerance and you are pushing your dog beyond hers, so she is having to resort to extreme behaviour to try to get you to understand you are doing something wrong, yet we still don't understand.

Your dog is telling you she does not like the way you treat her because you pester and bother her all the time, she doesn't get her brain challenged, she just gets endless attention for being busy and she doesn't like it.

Stop winding her up, start helping her to relax so she can enjoy your company and realise she is not a toy and needs to be treated with respect and trust.

Use your voice for praising good, calm behaviour, stop telling her off because that rewards bad behaviour.

Don't stroke her head when praising her, dogs don't like that. Instead, stroke her under her chin as this will help her relax and calm down. She clearly does not handle excitement and stress well as her behaviour has shown. Change how you interact with her and you will get the dog you want.

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