

Cowen completes Robben Island swim

TV and radio personality Samantha Cowen completed the gruelling 7.5km Robben Island to Blouberg crossing on Wednesday, 22 January in one of the coldest recorded water temperatures on this route for first-time swimmers.



A hypothermic Cowen reached the shore after spending just over three hours in the icy Atlantic which dipped to almost 9°C near the end of their challenge. She was rushed to the Big Bay Lifesaving club after reaching shore where she spent two hours recovering.

Cowen and Caren Strydom were accompanied in the water by world renowned South African open water and ultra-marathon swimmer Roger Finch, and Robben Island crossing record holder Theodore Yach, who has now completed 77 crossings. Strydom completed her swim in 2h20 while Cowen followed in 3h07.

Novice swimmer

Cowen said the cold water was her biggest challenge. "I never felt that I was going to give up, but there were times where I was exceptionally cold," she said. Cowen was a novice swimmer a year ago and spent winter training intensively in the chilly Wits outdoor pool under the guidance of Finch. Strydom said her highlight was swimming through a bait ball and being surrounded by inquisitive dolphins and other marine life.

Cowen and Strydom's kit for the swim was sponsored by Speedo which recently launched a global Get Speedo Fit campaign and resource centre, and aimed at inspiring people to choose swimming to get fit.

Speedo SA brand president Stuart Hopwood said Cowen and Strydom's feat was an inspiration. "Both of these incredible women have proven that if you set a goal and work towards it, nothing is impossible."