

**WILL WORLD'S FIRST FROZEN BABY BE FIRST IN OZ-TO-AFRICA  
ROWING RACE?**

***UK's young ocean rowers take on the world's great challenge***

In 1987 Jamie Facer-Childs made medical history – he and his twin Ben were the first twins born as a result of IVF treatment with frozen embryos at Bourn Hall Clinic, which was the first IVF clinic in the world. Now Jamie is set to enter the history books again as he attempts to win the first ever Indian Ocean Rowing race. Jamie and his race partner will be the youngest competitors in the race.

The 21 year-old Psychology graduate aims to row from Australia to Mauritius across the Indian Ocean with his school friend James Thyse in a 7 x 2m boat with just a small shelter to keep off the blistering heat and salt spray. The 3,600 nautical mile 'unsupported voyage' is set to take up to 90 days. The Indian Ocean is calmer than the Atlantic but more unpredictable, with the additional hazard of sharks.

Jamie is one of the first 1000 babies born as a result of treatment at Bourn Hall Clinic and is proud to be the result of a scientific breakthrough. He is using the race to raise funds for Sparks, a children's medical research charity with the aim of helping all babies to be born healthy and to stay healthy.

"Our goal is to raise awareness of the positive benefits that science can offer our future and to inspire others to realise the sheer extent to which we all can overcome great odds if we put our minds to it", he says.

The two friends are being helped by a sports psychologist and have identified clear objectives to keep them going, including a shared desire to remain friends!

James Thyse, a medical science graduate, wants to become a doctor. His chosen charity is Headway, the brain injury association, after he saw the enormous support it gave to a close friend following a horrific car accident.

“We are setting out to win this race. Ocean rowing is still relatively new, and fewer than 200 people have rowed the Atlantic compared to 500 who have been up in space. The Australia to Mauritius crossing is one of the last great challenges. Only two people have ever rowed it and they were solo.

“We are training hard and taking advice on nutrition as we will be rowing on our body fat. A big test will be the psychological pressure, and a positive attitude will be essential to our survival.”

Jamie’s mother Rosemary Facer made medical history when she was treated by IVF pioneer Patrick Steptoe at the clinic he had co-founded with Robert Edwards in Cambridgeshire in 1980. Her twins were the first to be born as a result of frozen embryo transfer, a technique that was developed at Bourn Hall Clinic.

“It was ‘frontier work’ and I was excited to be part of it. It was all amazing. Mr Steptoe was a very distinguished and formidable character, but I felt totally safe in his hands. He was clear, not at all haughty and made me feel at home.”

Rosemary is extremely proud of her sons and daughter Elise, who was also born as a result of IVF three years later.

“By taking on this challenge, Jamie is demonstrating to all the many critics that IVF babies are just as healthy as other children and he is living life to the full. As a mother it is always a concern when your children do something as challenging as this but he has the qualities needed to succeed.”

The two friends are fundraising hard to support their endeavour and their chosen charities. Further details are available on [www.oztoafrika.com](http://www.oztoafrika.com).

- ENDS -

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**About Bourn Hall Clinic [www.bourn-hall-clinic.co.uk](http://www.bourn-hall-clinic.co.uk)**

Bourn Hall Clinic, the world's first and best known assisted conception clinic, was established in 1980 by Patrick Steptoe and Robert Edwards, the pioneers of IVF. Through innovative thinking the clinic maintains a leading role in the field.

Bourn Hall Clinic is an operating division of Bourn Hall Limited, and is located at Bourn Hall, Bourn, Cambridge, CB23 2TN, UK Tel: 01954 719 111

**About Oz to Africa [www.oztoafrika.com](http://www.oztoafrika.com)**

Jamie Facer-Childs and James Thyse aim to participate in the First Indian Ocean Rowing Race, starting on the 19th April 2009. The route is 3,600 nautical miles and will take 60-90 days to complete.

Survival depends on their mental and physical stamina and on the boat, which is specially designed to withstand the waves. The two men will be 'unsupported' which means they must be self-sufficient for food, water and medical treatment in order to compete.

There are currently 26 boats in the race. James and Jamie are the youngest competitors.

They are raising money for two charities, Sparks and Headway.

**About Sparks [www.sparks.org.uk](http://www.sparks.org.uk)**

Our mission is to help all babies be born healthy and stay healthy. We raise money to give all babies the best start in life – a healthy one.

Our vision is for a world where all babies are given the best possible start in life and where a medical condition or disability at birth is not a barrier to opportunity and fulfilment. We aim to achieve this by funding high quality medical research that is intended to have a practical and positive effect on the lives of children.

**About Headway** [www.headway.org.uk](http://www.headway.org.uk)

Headway is a charity whose mission is to promote understanding of all aspects of brain injury and to provide information, support and services to people with a brain injury, their families and carers. The charity was set up in 1980 because the 1970s had seen dramatic advances in neurosurgery, keeping alive people who would previously have died from their serious head injuries. These advances were not being matched by parallel funding of rehabilitation and community-based care services, meaning that head-injured people were being discharged into the care of unprepared families.

Nowadays, a network of local Headway groups and branches throughout the UK offers rehabilitation programmes, carer support, social re-integration, community outreach and respite care. Nationally, Headway provides a UK Helpline, publishes a range of booklets, lobbies for better support and resources to be made available by healthcare providers, and campaigns for measures that will reduce the number of brain injuries.