

BRITONS ARE YOUNGEST ROWERS TO CROSS INDIAN OCEAN

'Frozen baby' grows into intrepid young man determined to succeed

Britons James Thyse and Jamie Facer-Childs (22) have become the youngest pairs crew ever to row across the Indian Ocean. Jamie was amongst the first 1000 babies born as a result of IVF treatment at Bourn Hall Clinic and one of the first frozen-embryo twins in the world.

The two have been at sea for 103 days competing in the inaugural Indian Ocean Rowing Race 2009. They narrowly missed beating the only other pairs team in the race when they finished on 31st July 2009.

Bringing this most extreme of ocean adventures to a close, James and Jamie are the fifth and final team to finish, just hours after the 'Flying Ferkins'. The two boats have had a fierce battle, swapping positions numerous times during the 3,132 nautical miles from Geraldton, Western Australia across the Indian Ocean to the beautiful island of Mauritius.

They have completed the journey in a 7x2m boat with just a small shelter to keep off the blistering heat and salt spray. Prior to the race only 2 people had rowed the Indian Ocean which although calmer than the Atlantic, is more unpredictable, with the additional hazard of sharks.

The two lads discovered this to their cost when their boat capsized in the first half of the race, damaging equipment and ruining food supplies and increasing the odds against them finishing the race. They were forced to ration meals causing considerable weight loss, yet despite these obstacles, the youngest team in the race achieved their goal with a crossing time of 103 days, 9 hours and 26 minutes.

James Thyse comments: "Capsizing in the middle of the Indian Ocean was the most scared I have ever been. But when we righted, checked over the boat and had time to reflect, we were more determined than ever to reach Mauritius, no matter what.

“Seeing all our friends and family on the dockside in Mauritius was an amazing feeling and something I will never forget. We are now both looking forward to the delight of putting all our lost weight back on again.”

For Jamie Facer-Childs it is second time he has made history – in 1987 he and his brother Ben were the first twins born as a result of IVF treatment with frozen embryos at Bourn Hall Clinic. His mother Rosemary Facer was treated by IVF pioneer Patrick Steptoe at the clinic he had co-founded with Robert Edwards in Cambridgeshire. Her twins were the first to be born as a result of frozen embryo transfer, a technique that was developed at the clinic which she describes as ‘frontier work.’

As one of the first 1000 babies born as a result of treatment at Bourn Hall Clinic, Jamie is proud to be the result of a scientific breakthrough and 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.

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 has demonstrated 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 shown that he has the qualities needed to succeed.”

Bourn Hall Clinic was one of the sponsors for the Southern Cross and the Human Resources Director Nicola Graver spoke for all at the clinic:

“We have been following the lads progress throughout the race and are immensely proud and relieved to see them safely across. It has been a nail biting journey and a huge achievement, we look forward to seeing them fit and well later in the year.”

Prime Minister Gordon Brown said in a letter to all the teams: "An event such as this has the power to inspire people both within the field of rowing and throughout the wider public.

"I would like to send my warmest best wishes to all of those who took part in this year's Race and to commend your efforts in raising money for good causes. I am sure it was a physically and mentally gruelling race but ultimately provided rich and rewarding memories of the occasion."

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About Bourn Hall Clinic 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.