

Nathalie Pohl is the first German woman to conquer the Ocean's Seven

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Standout athlete celebrates sensational success in the North Channel

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It's an incredibly impressive achievement: after more than ten years of hard graft, many successes and also setbacks, extreme swimmer and two-time world record holder Nathalie Pohl, who comes from Hesse, has made her biggest dream come true by becoming the first German woman to complete the Ocean's Seven challenge of crossing the world's seven most dangerous straits. The 29-year-old swam the approximately 41-kilometre stretch from Gobbins in Northern Ireland to Portpatrick in Scotland on 15th of September in an impressive time of 11:05:24 hours. She has been one of the best female open water swimmers in the world for some time. But with this incredible achievement, Nathalie Pohl has finally made history as the first German woman and the 33rd person in the world to rise to this challenge.

It took the standout athlete and best-selling author (book title: *Im Meer bin ich zu Hause*) more than 40.000 arm strokes to swim to Scotland – in what is probably the toughest of the seven ocean swims. At around 41 kilometres, the North Channel is around 10 kilometres longer than the English Channel, depending on the current, and is considered the much more difficult route. For a start, the water temperature is lower – while the water temperature in Dover is around 17 degrees in summer, it is a mere 14 degrees around Gobbins at that time of the year. Secondly, the currents and the somewhat unpredictable sea conditions make this route extremely challenging. The biggest hurdle, however, is the sea dwellers, in particular the lion's mane jellyfish. And unlike the water temperature or the route, you can't prepare yourself for their stings all that well. They are extremely painful. The North Channel was therefore considered uncrossable for swimmers for a long time. The first successful crossing only came in 1947, followed only in 1970 by the second successful attempt. By way of comparison, the North Channel has only been successfully swum by around 150 people, whereas there have been more than 3,000 successful crossings of the English Channel. Nathalie Pohl's success has involved making it across both stretches. She is overjoyed: "It hasn't quite sunk in yet. I trained for this moment for ten years, spending hours in the water every day. I feel incredibly proud to have now actually made it. It feels fantastic to have been able to push my body beyond its limits. And being rewarded with this success makes it all the more wonderful."

Nathalie Pohl's path to this extraordinary success was not always straightforward. On her first leg of the Ocean's Seven, the English Channel, in 2015, rather than heading to the shore, she was taken directly to hospital with a pulmonary embolism. But in spite of all the challenges, Nathalie Pohl didn't give up, modifying her training and coming back stronger than ever in 2016. She set a German record when swimming this stretch. In the course of her career as an extreme swimmer, she has set two world records (Strait of Gibraltar in 2016, Jersey Channel in 2020) and has written a book. Published in spring 2024, the book covers her impressive story that took her from the swimming pool to the oceans of the world. It made it onto the *SPIEGEL* best-seller list in its first week.

None of these successes would have been possible without one thing in particular – Nathalie Pohl's iron will. Complete discipline, countless hours at swimming pools and in the sea, and a lifestyle entirely oriented towards her training have been part and parcel of the standout athlete's life for years. A great deal of work went into completing each and every leg, all beginning up to a year in advance. "But the water temperature in the North Channel in particular took our preparations to a completely new level," explains Nathalie Pohl's coach Joshua Neuloh. After winter training had been held in Portugal and Majorca, he and Nathalie Pohl travelled to Ireland and Scotland in the summer to step up training in the rough seas there that were just 14 degrees. This was necessary in order for her body to be better prepared. "You never entirely get used to it. Cold water is cold," adds Nathalie Pohl. By crossing the North Channel, she has now realised her biggest dream. In conclusion, she says "I'm incredibly proud to have achieved my objective. Although the journey was really tough, every arm stroke, every extra kilometre in training and every cold shower was more than worth it. My success clearly illustrates that you should never give up and should always believe in yourself and your dream, no matter how difficult it may be."

More information available at: <https://nathaliepohl.de/>

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