

Staying down under - for 12 hours

New junior diving record established by Maragon learners

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TWO MARAGON learners, Matthew Marais (15) and Gareth Van der Merwe (17), recently decided to attempt a junior cave dive record at Scubaversity dive centre in Ruimsig.

It entailed spending a full 12 hours in the underwater cave, not being able to surface at all during this time. The two bravely resolved to show their depth after hearing that their instructors had completed a 25-hour stint in the same cave, barely a year after completing their advanced open water dive certifications.

"Many people reckon it's not such a big deal and that anyone can pull it off," says Tamsin Manicom, a fellow diver who was there to watch the boys attempt their endurance dive.

"It is not an easy thing to do physically or mentally. The longer you spend in the cave, the smaller it gets. The urge to swim out and break the surface must be huge. I know I personally wouldn't have made it beyond three hours - never mind four times that!"

The dive took place in March this year with both boys a little ap-

they used a total of 26 220 litres of air each, and changed kit an amazing seven times. It was very amusing, according to Manicom, to watch the boys change kits.

"It was very entertaining, watching the two change kit the first time," she says. "They forgot to help each other, each wriggling under water to get out of his kit. They realised very quickly that it would be far simpler to lend each other a hand."

Dehydration, hunger and anxiety could not prevent the boys from reaching their 12-hour goal, although the onset of these issues in the second half of the period made it considerably more challenging to stay cool in the pool.

They also became aware of the sheer weight of their kit, which started to give back aches. Their mouths started to hurt as a result of their regulator mouthpieces.

Van der Merwe went as far as to remove his watch, the ticking sound starting to make their underwater wait unbearable.

According to the boys, the last two hours were the most difficult and needed as much staying power as the preceding 10.

But when it was time to start ascending, they were quick to get themselves organised.

They made a slow ascent, hand-over-hand up the buoy line, breaking the surface at 9pm to a large crowd and some very relieved relatives.



DIGGING DEEP: Maragon learners Matthew Marais and Gareth van der Merwe with coach Wouter van Heerden after their 12 hours under water. Both received oxygen for 10 minutes after the dive as a precautionary measure.

prehensive, but ready. They entered the water at 9am both clad in two wetsuits, gloves and hooded sweaters. These were to fight off the cold that would set in during the

later stages of the dive. The first hours passed quickly as the two played dominos and noughts and crosses on the pool floor with instructor Wouter van

Heerden. Water currents made the game interesting, shifting the pieces with the smallest movement.

In the 12 hours that Marais and Van der Merwe spent underwater,