

Breathtaking effort by yoga teacher sets a freediving record

By Claire Duffin

A YOGA teacher has set a UK freediving record – swimming almost four lengths of an Olympic pool without coming up for air.

Rebecca Coales, 38, said she believed her yoga training had helped her with the concentration and strength needed to hold her breath for more than two and a half minutes as she swam 587 feet (179 metres).

Miss Coales, who is originally from Stockport but now lives in Bristol, started competing in freediving competitions only last year.

She beat the record, which has stood since 2009, in the dynamic with fins discipline, by 13ft.

It involves swimming as far as possible underwater in a swimming pool on a single breath with flippers, or in Miss Coales's case, a monofin. She already holds the national record for freediving without fins – swimming a distance of 475ft – and now plans to challenge for world records.

“A lot of people think it is an extreme sport and it is dangerous but as long as you have the right training and you have people in the water there with



Rebecca Coales swam 587ft underwater on one breath

you in case anything does go wrong, there is no reason why it can't be just as safe as swimming,” she said.

“Yes, we are holding our breath but so far in my training, even though I am going the furthest in this country, I still haven't experienced any negative effects, I haven't blacked out or anything like that.

“It is actually a relaxing sport – the key to being good at freediving is to be able to relax and focus and being able to accept that little bit of discomfort.”

Miss Coales, a keen scuba

diver, took up freediving recreationally five years ago.

“I really like the water but wanted to be in the water without the equipment, as it can be quite restrictive,” she said.

She now trains for 12 to 15 hours a week. Her training involves strength work in the gym, running with a personal trainer and yoga – as well as practising holding her breath on dry land and in the pool.

“The yoga is really helpful for relaxation but also for mental focus because that is so important with the freediving I find that it works really well together,” said Miss Coales, a project manager with the Environment Agency.

Miss Coales broke the record at Stockport's Grand Central swimming pool.

The world dynamic with fins record is 767ft, set by 22-time Russian world champion Natalia Molchanova, 52, in June 2013.

Other freediving disciplines include sea apnea, where competitors attempt to dive to great depths. The British Freediving Association was set up in 1999 and several hundred people are now thought to participate in the UK.