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MARIA CLAIMS TWO SOUTH POLE FIRSTS

A 35 year old British adventurer has claimed two world records over Christmas. Maria Leijerstam from the Vale of Glamorgan is the first person to cycle to the South Pole from the edge of the Antarctic continent in 10 days beating all other speed records.

“Her success was down to meticulous planning, super fitness, both physically and mentally and pure determination,” said her mother Adrienne Leijerstam.

“From the time she was 12 years old and announced she wanted to be an astronaut, Maria has always been an adventurer. We are thrilled she has made it in such good time.”

Maria, a former head of business improvement with Siemens, now runs Multisport Wales organising running, cycling and kayaking races.

She describes Antarctica as “vicious yet beautiful” and her journey has not been without its problems. A severe knee injury, breathing difficulties, highly challenging conditions both under tyre and in the weather were only some of the things Maria needed to face up to.

Snow drifts, complete white outs and crevasses marred her passage but even so she was able to cycle the whole distance on her three wheeled recumbent Polar Cycle.

A two year planning and development programme by the White Ice Cycle team produced a unique cycle concept that was then manufactured by Inspired Cycle Engineering of Cornwall.

Maria has vast experience in tough challenges. She was the first woman in the world to cycle the frozen length of Russia’s Lake Baikal in 2012 and she has also completed the challenging Marathon Des Sables.

Roald Amundsen, was the first person to reach the South Pole in 1911 using two metre long skis which made crevasse crossing easier for him. He was five weeks ahead of a British party led by Robert Falcon Scott as part of the Terra Nova Expedition. Amundsen and his team returned safely to their base and later learned that Scott and his four companions died on their return journey.