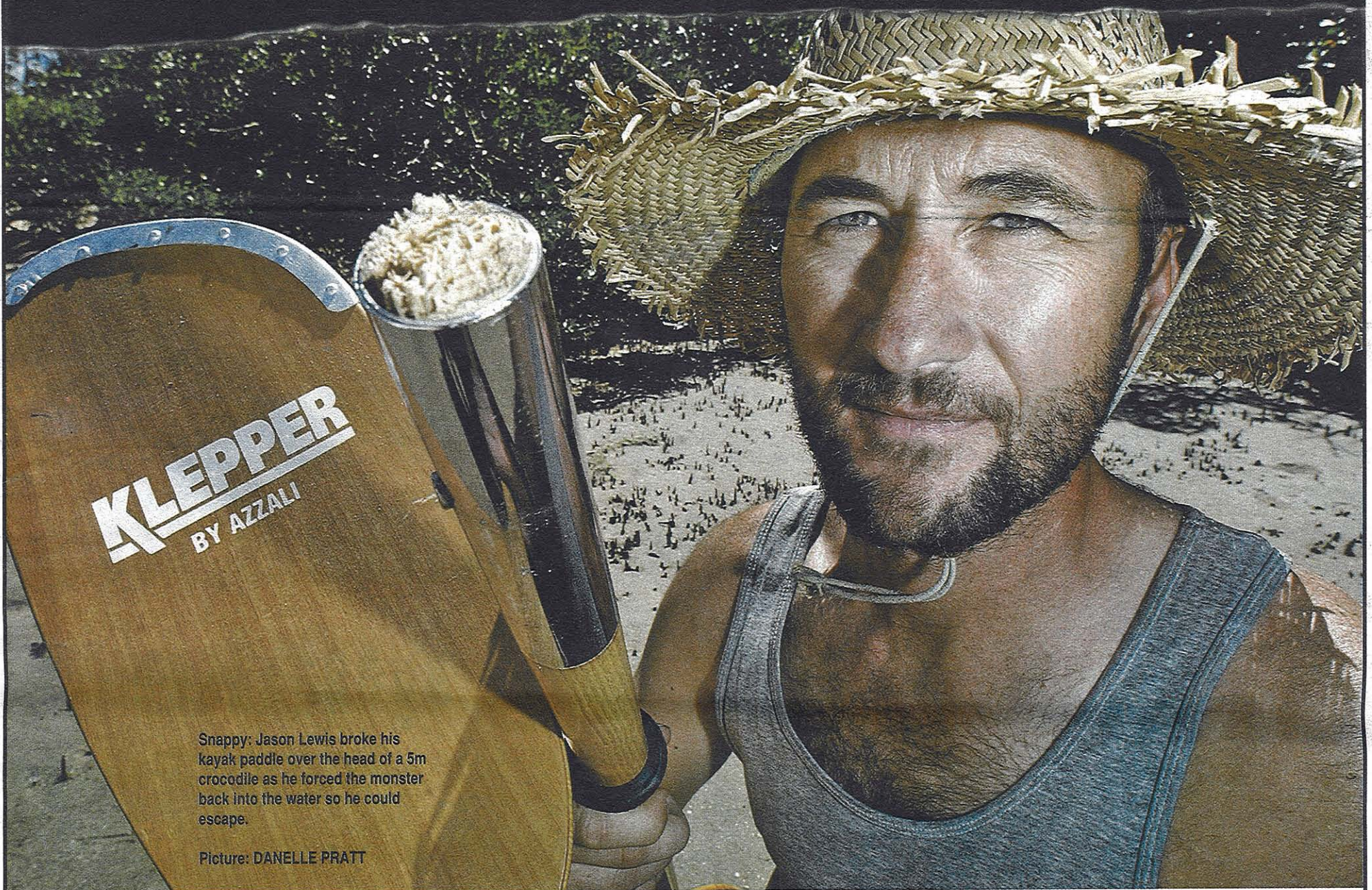


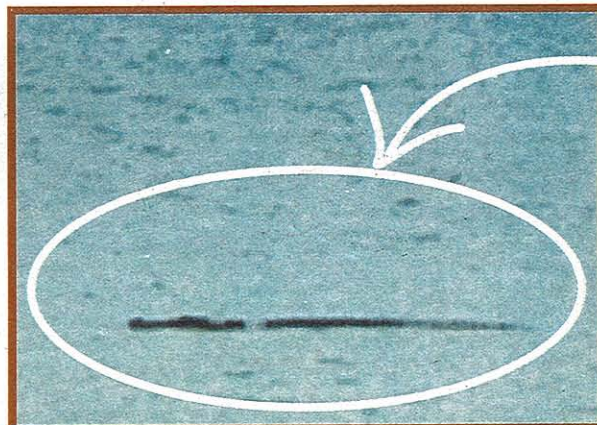
Round-the-world Pommie paddler fights off monster



Snappy: Jason Lewis broke his kayak paddle over the head of a 5m crocodile as he forced the monster back into the water so he could escape.

Picture: DANELLE PRATT

CROC BAIT



THE CROC: The 5m monster tried to catch Jason Lewis as he paddled his leaking kayak to shore near Cooktown. It is 50-60 years old and capable of pulling down a large horse or cow.

"I THOUGHT I was going to die," a Briton who survived a crocodile attack in his leaking kayak near Cooktown said yesterday.

Londoner Jason Lewis, 37, paddled for his life as a 5m monster snapped its jaws behind him for 100m and then chased him up the beach late on Good Friday.

"I just paddled as fast as I could and the faster I paddled, the quicker the croc followed

EXCLUSIVE

Kerri-Ann Stout

me," he said. "By the time I hit the beach it was only about 3m behind me; I had just paddled all day but I sprang out of the kayak as if I had all the energy in the world."

But the croc was not giving up its dinner easily.

The predator staked out the beached kayak overnight,

stopping Mr Lewis from reaching his satellite phone and calling for help.

Whenever a desperate Mr Lewis tried to get back to his kayak, the croc lunged at him with its mouth open, letting out a terrifying hiss.

The plucky Englishman spent a sleepless night without food or water in the bushes as the croc swam up and down the shallow water off the beach.

■ Continued Page 2

HERO PLUMBER IN FIERY RESCUE — P3

TODAY'S WEATHER

Mostly fine 31

Global adventurer beats off croc

■ From Page 1

In a desperate bid to reach his phone and call rescuers, Mr Lewis stabbed at the croc with his double-ended paddle, only to have the beast latch on to the blade.

Miraculously Mr Lewis was able to free the paddle from the croc's vice-like jaws and hit it over the head, snapping the paddle and finally scaring the monster back into the water. Grabbing his satellite phone, Mr Lewis dialled for help and was evacuated to Cooktown by seaplane on Saturday and is now recovering in Cairns.

His close encounter came as he was completing a 48km journey from Lizard Island to the Queensland mainland in a leaking kayak as part of his quest to become the first person to sail around the world using human power.

He left Lizard Island about 8am and sighted land at Lookout Point, north of Cooktown, about 5pm on March 25.

He started his epic journey from the Greenwich Meridian Line in England in 1994 and has since travelled more than 20,000km — two-thirds of the way around the

planet — without help from motors or the wind.

Mr Lewis heads to Darwin on Monday and plans to travel to East Timor in a unique pedal-powered boat, then kayak through the Indonesian chain of islands to Singapore. He expects to cycle through Thailand, Laos and into China before hiking south over the Himalayas to India.

The adventure will continue with a crossing of the Indian Ocean to East Africa, through North Africa and Europe to finish at the Greenwich Meridian Line in 2007.