

Tough haul for Rotto winner

Erienne Lette

SWIMMER Jeremy Brooke-Smith won a gruelling Rottnest Channel Swim yesterday, as competitors said the choppy conditions were some of the toughest they had faced in years.

Brooke-Smith's victory in the annual race, now in its 23rd year, made up for his disappointment of last year when he finished third.

"I've wanted to win for a while" the 25-year-old said. "Thirty minutes into it I realised it was going to be a tough day in the office."

"I just want to thank everyone for all their support."

Brooke-Smith finished the 19.7km race in 4hr 34min 37sec.

Despite a summer of almost daily beach closures caused by shark sightings, the race had another bumper turnout with 2300 competitors.

Premier Colin Barnett sounded the first race horn just before 6am.

Perth City Swimming Club's Heidi Gan and Simon Huitenga dominated the duo field to set a record of 4hr 8min 11sec in their section. It was five minutes



Premier event: Colin Barnett starts the race. Right, winning male Jeremy Brooke-Smith.

faster than the previous best in 2005. "It was a pretty good race," Gan said. "We'd done lots of training."

Queensland lifesaver Jess Walker made it back-to-back wins in the women's competition, reaching Rottnest Island in 4hr 47min 58sec.

She won last year with a quicker time and said the event was "really tough" this year.

"It hurt earlier than last year, but I heard my brother on the boat and my boyfriend so that helped," she said.

Team Euphoria - comprising Gene Williams, Patrick Hoey, Bobby Jovanovich and Josh Ciccone - was the first team to cross the line.

Many swimmers were competing to raise money for charity. Ian Gordon, of City Beach,

raised more than \$12,500 for Diabetes WA.

He entered the swim after his son, Findlay, was diagnosed with type-1 diabetes after his third birthday last year.

"Just thinking of this little boy (was what kept me going)," he said.

Go to PerthNow for a picture gallery of yesterday's race.