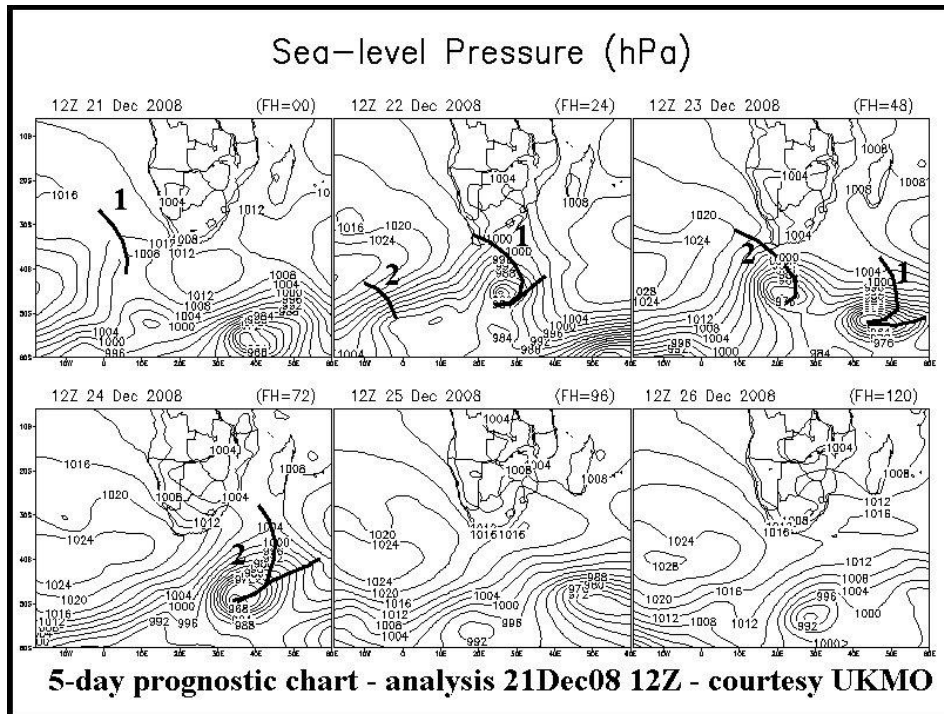
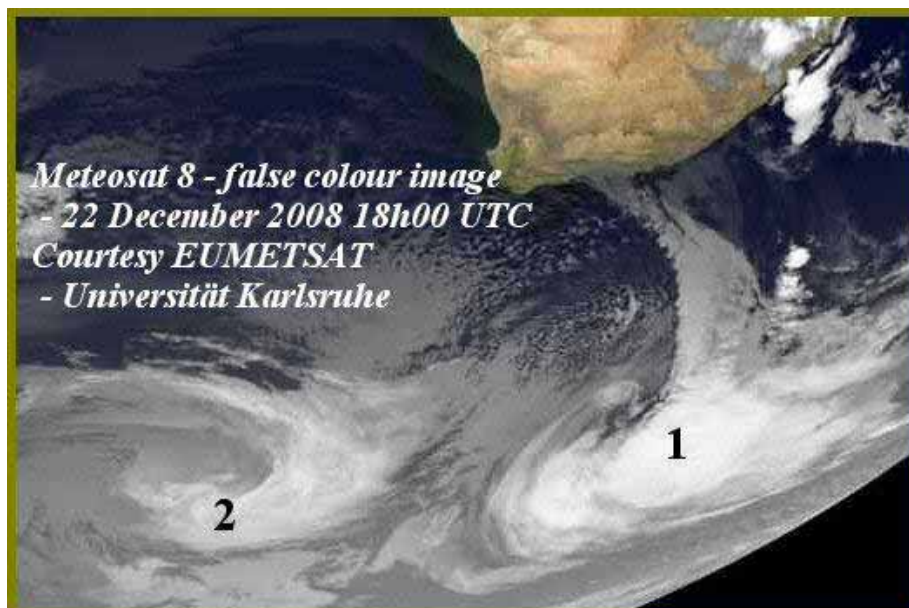


Two severe December storms : Heavy seas take their toll. Christmas swell for Capetonians

Yesterday, Monday 22 December 2008 there was a case of explosive cyclogenesis, as a low pressure system (1) passed south of the Agulhas Bank.



The prediction above was very close to the actual situation. Note how the central pressure west of Cape Town on Sunday afternoon (~ 1006 hPa) plummeted to below 972 hPa by yesterday morning : 34 hPa in 24 hours ! In the month of December - and relatively close to the coast...



Note also how rapidly the associated frontal trough moved through – already well to the south-east of the sub-continent by yesterday evening (see 18h00 UTC satellite image above)

The wind on the FA gas production Platform (western Agulhas Bank) peaked at 15h30 SAST – SW'ly 53 kts gusting 61. As would be expected wave conditions peaked after the wind, at 6.30 pm - significant wave height 7.2m.

Sadly, one of the victims of this 1st storm was a chokka boat off Oyster Bay (west of Cape St Francis).

Consider now the prediction for system (2) – forecast to be in some ways more severe than its forerunner, although the intensification rate is not quite as high :

1. It develops further west – the Western Cape is going to see significantly higher swell this time round. In fact it looks like Cape Town surfers will have a special Christmas present, courtesy of the Southern Ocean. By Christmas Eve the wind is predicted to back to offshore – with a long, SW'ly swell of over 6m, easing to ~ 3m by the end of Christmas day
2. The 2nd low is still moving *north*-east up to ~ the longitude of Cape Agulhas (20°E) – another significant factor when it comes to wave generation
3. It is followed by a ridge of the South Atlantic High – also a wave enhancing factor, due to the longer fetch and further backing of the swell direction

Merry Christmas – Ian Hunter - 23-12-08