

Death Valley holds no fears for Noel



Noel Hanna preparing for his trip to the Sahara Desert.

NOT satisfied with running across the Sahara Desert and up the Himalayan Mountains, Dromore ultra-runner, Noel Hanna is now preparing to compete in the Death Valley Challenge in America.

Although hampered by a knee injury, Noel (32) is in the final stages of preparation and will set off for Death Valley on July 9 to participate in the gruelling race.

Death Valley is on the border of California and Nevada and as it is 286 feet below sea level, Noel can expect temperatures of between 130-140 degrees for the 135 mile race.

The Hi-Tec Badwater race begins on July 15 and the course covers three mountain ranges for a total of 13,000ft of vertical

ascent and 4,700ft of descent.

It is one of the most demanding and extreme ultra-marathons.

Matt Frederick, Badwater Race Director said, "The people who compete in the Hi-Tec Badwater Ultra-Marathon are the best that the human race has to offer, not only as athletes but as individuals.

"They will battle dehydration, extreme temperatures, sleep deprivation, a relentless course and they'll finish with the best smile you've ever seen," he added.

Competitors have 60 hours to complete the course.

It is expected however, that the winner of the race will finish in 26-30 hours.

Noel is aiming at covering 100 miles in the first 24 hours (he is carrying an injury after all).

"The race starts at 6.00 am and I'll be on the move until the finish with a combination of running and walking," said Noel.

Noel won't be alone during the race as his wife, Joan will be part of his support crew travelling alongside him in a van with

Report by
**John
Hooks**

ultra-marathon expert, Kim Lewis.

The support crew will have an important role to play during the race, keeping Noel hydrated and monitoring his health, as it has been known in the past for runners to suffer renal shutdown (kidney failure) and even death.

The crew therefore, must be able to spot the symptoms along with other serious risks such as heat stroke.

Noel is no stranger to these extraordinary feats of

endurance, having already won the Himalayan Challenge and finishing the Sahara Marathon Des Salles in 30th position.

In this event he was fourth out of the 110 competitors from Britain and Ireland.

His training has been somewhat hampered by a knee injury he picked up on the second day of the Sahara race and is still niggling him today.

TRAINING

"I have not been able to run as much as I would like but I have been clocking up a few miles on my training bike which I have set up in a sauna," stated Noel.

When asked about his private life it was no surprise to learn what the title of Noel's favourite film was.

"It's 'Who Dares Wins,'" he confessed.

Noel set to star in film

NOEL Hanna's rise to become one of Britain's top ultra-runners has not only given him the opportunity to meet a lot of people and visit some of the world's beauty spots, he is now going to star in a film.

The film will take the form of a documentary and concentrates on Noel's next race, The Death Valley Challenge.

It will be a 'fly on the wall' look at the racer's preparations for the race along with the actual race itself and everything that goes on behind the scenes.

As all Noel's preparations were carried out in Northern Ireland, an American film crew

came to his home in Dromore and filmed him at home.

"It was a strange experience, the crew arrived at 7.00am and stayed until 10.00pm, filming everything I did," said Noel.

The film is due for release in America in the middle of next year and is also set to be snapped up worldwide following its U.S. showing.

This is not Noel's first time in the limelight as he has been a guest at Buckingham Palace after winning the Himalayan Challenge.

"I met the Queen and some of the other Royals at the reception, as well as the All Saints," added Noel.