

Everest man continues to take living to the extremes

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SPEAK to Dromara man Noel Hanna and the hilltop chorus of a certain singing nun instantly springs to mind.

For the 39-year-old fitness instructor from Co Down seems to have taken Julie Andrews' mantra to heart and has made climbing every mountain his lifetime ambition.

"I am trying to get into the record books by climbing the highest mountain in each continent and then travelling to sea level by human power - cycling, for example," he said.

The extreme sportsman has already conquered South America, climbing Aconcagua in Argentina, and is returning to the Himalayas next month when he hopes it will be a case of second time lucky.

Last year, Noel was forced to abandon his climb to the

summit of Mount Everest after he suffered haemorrhaging behind his eyes and doctors warned that he could lose his sight if he continued.

Not put off by the disappointment, Noel is once again preparing himself for the mammoth challenge.

"I've not got high hopes of doing it but I'm not ruling it out either," he said.

"I can't do any more preparation than I have already so now I'm just hoping the weather is kind."

The last time Noel was on the 29,035 ft mountain, he was with the woman who is now his wife, Lynne.

They were just a mile away from the peak when Noel was told the effects of the altitude could leave

him blind and Lynne had no hesitation in turning back with her fiancé.

This time, however, she has decided to stay away from the dizzying heights to look after their dog.

Noel said: "Lynne would love to be going but she couldn't get the time off work. If I manage to reach the summit I'll be away for more than two months."

The daring adventurer is also struggling to overcome an injury suffered last year when he fractured and dislocated his elbow.

"I have the strength back but it's just the mobility that's a problem," he said.

"But it's the buzz you get. It's like someone who rides a motorbike and crashes - they get straight back on. Or you fall off a horse - it's the same thing.

"I suppose I just have a passion for extreme sports."



PEAK PERFORMERS: climbers Lynne and Noel Hanna keep up the pace