

Dromara man heading to Borneo for world famous endurance race

Noel's all set for a gruelling rumble in the jungle

DROMARA'S Noel Hanna and his team of intrepid adventure racers set off for the jungle of Borneo, Malaysia on Monday (August 7) to compete in the annual Eco Challenge world championships.

The race will take place over 12 days and the 80 teams made up of four members (at least one of whom must be female) will have to traverse 300 miles of some of the roughest country in the world.

During the 12 days all of the contestants will have to display incredible levels of fitness and a mastery of jungle trekking, canyoning, river paddling, caving, sailing, kayaking, mountain biking, abseiling, rope climbing and diving.

Noel's team is made up of himself, Ian Cummings from Warrenpoint, Allison Maurice of Saintfield and Killarney man Timmy Flaven and they are travelling to Borneo before the race for a six day diving course and three days of testing to ensure that they are capable of taking part in it.

The racing starts on August 21 and Noel (33) who works as a Civil Servant and fitness instructor explained why he enjoys the sport so much.

"It is a challenge, to live life to the full and push yourself to the absolute limit of your physical fitness and endurance," he said.

"On day one you leave the base with all the gear you will need for the race including food, sleeping bags and tents and we will have to strain the water we need from rivers and swamps along the way.

"All of the team has to finish the race. If someone gets hurt, which can easily happen, the team will have to carry him or her over the finish line or retire from the race and apparently if you get lost you could be wandering around the jungle for weeks."

Last year Noel took part in the eco-challenge in Patagonia, Argentina where his team finished in twenty-fifth position out of 58 teams - the first Irish team ever to finish the gruelling event.



Borneo to run!

Dromara man Noel Hanna and Allison Maurice who are part of the Ireland team competing in the Eco Challenge 2000 Adventure Race. 31030HB

In previous years the race has been staged in Morocco, Australia and British Columbia but the humidity, temperatures and wildlife in Borneo will present a new aspect to the challenge.

"I am expecting temperatures of up to 35 degrees and humidity of between 90 and 95 per cent and we will have to cope with mosquitoes and snakes which should be interesting" explained Noel.

"My training for the race has involved getting out on the bike regularly and going up into the Mournes with a good heavy rucksack. I enjoy the team aspect of the race but I also like individual events

because you have nobody to let down but yourself."

Noel has plenty of experience of racing in different climates. In 1992 he won a 100 mile race in the Himalayas and he has also taken part in races in the Sahara Desert and Death Valley.

"I am really looking forward to getting started in the event and I would like to thank everyone who has helped me in my training and our sponsors - Clarins Beauty Products, Bridgedale Socks, Hi-tech footwear, Montrail footwear and Crag Hoppers clothing."