

Marathon man Noel faces a new challenge

DROMARA marathon man Noel Hanna, who specialises in gruelling endurance tests, is off on another challenge.

The 32-year-old fitness instructor and civil servant, is heading for the searing heat of the Sahara Desert where he will compete in the Marathon Des Sables race.

It is a six-day 222 kilometre trek across the Sahara on foot.

Noel is not daunted by the fact that the Des Sables is classed as one of the toughest races on earth.

Temperatures range from a daytime 120-130 degrees to freezing at night.

Competitors carry everything they need in a rucksack, food, cooking facilities, clothes and sleeping bag. Over 500 of them will converge on the venue with more than 100 making the trip from the United

Kingdom and Ireland.

Over 100 television channels from 150 countries will have access to pictures.

PUNISHING

Noel is currently maintaining a punishing training schedule, which consists of running between 60 and 80 miles per week on roads and over the Mourne Mountains.

He also cycles on a turbo trainer and immerses himself in a sauna to get used to the heat, with two or three weight training sessions each week.

Noel plans to be among the top UK and Irish finishers and will be disappointed if he is not in the first 40 overall.

He is a man of vast experience and just under two years ago won the 100 mile Himalayan stage race.

Noel has also been to America for the Los Angeles Crest 100 mile endurance race in which he came a creditable 19th.