

Into Death Valley

An Extraordinary Feat of Endurance

Noel Hanna is not a man to stop at running across the Sahara Desert and up the Himalayan Mountains. The Dromore ultra-runner has now competed in the Death Valley Challenge in America. Despite a knee injury Noel prepared for this most gruelling of feats in the run up to the July race.

Death Valley is on the border of California and Nevada, altitude 286 feet below sea level and with temperatures between 130 and 140 degrees, for the duration of the 135 mile race - which must be completed within 60 hours.

The Hi-Tech Badwater Race began on July 15 and the course covered three mountain ranges for a total of 13,000 feet of vertical ascent and 4,700 feet of descent. Matt Frederick, Badwater Race Director said "The people who compete in the Hi-Tech 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."

Noel's wife Joan was part of the support team who travelled alongside him in a van with ultra-marathon expert Kim Lewis. They were there to keep him hydrated and check his health, which is vital as past competitors have been known to suffer kidney failure and even death.

Noel finished the gruelling challenge and returned to Northern Ireland on 24th July in one piece and with no blisters. Out of forty-four competitors he came in at tenth place, completing the 137 mile course in 39 hours. He now looks forward to the next challenge in Argentina in November.

All this was a titanic achievement enough - but Noel is now star in a US documentary film which was made for release later this year in the USA.