



## Sahara challenge

It's billed as 'the toughest footrace on earth'.

Six marathons in seven days, in some of the harshest conditions on the planet.

Six members of Southampton Athletic Club are taking on the Marathon des Sables next month (3<sup>rd</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> April), covering 152 miles across the sand dunes and rocky mountains of the Sahara Desert in Africa.

Huge camel spiders and deadly snakes will be the least of their worries.

The team must be self-sufficient throughout the race, carrying backpacks containing all their food, clothing, stoves, medical kits (including anti-venom pumps), sleeping bags and compulsory items such as a whistle, compass and aluminium survival sheet. Only water and tents are provided along the way. They have even had to pay a refundable repatriation fee in case the unthinkable happens.

The Southampton team will also be battling against temperatures nearing 50°C during the day and approaching freezing at night.

The team comprises environmental scientist Becky Mulley, 31, neurologist Jo Kitley, 29, pharmacist Emyr Morgan, 39, biomedical scientist Trent House, 29, and husband and wife Kevin and Sally Gilbert, aged 49 and 53.

They have been training hard for months to ensure their fitness is up to the challenge, taking part in local on and off-road races as well as organising their own day-long treks carrying heavy backpacks.

Becky said: "I'm really looking forward to the MdS. I think it will be more of a mental challenge to just keep going, than a physical one. But I'm not looking forward to the prospect of skin-less feet from all the sand getting in my shoes, or the camel spiders!"

The team, which flies out to Morocco on April 1, is supporting two charities – Smile4Wessex at the Wessex Neurological Centre in Southampton (<http://www.smile4wessex.org>), and Medecins Sans Frontieres (<http://www.msf.org>) – by raising sponsorship for their challenge.

Emyr said: "Every day I see the good work that Smile4Wessex does on our wards when it comes to improving patient care, so it seemed the right charity to combine with Medicines Sans Frontiers to collect for".

The team would like to thank local companies C3IA Solutions Ltd, Prohealth Recruitment Ltd and Banilla Web Applications Ltd for their kit sponsorship, and also Hampshire Tennis and Health Club for the use of their gym and sauna to help them acclimatise to the heat and prepare for the race.

To sponsor the team, visit <http://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/sotonmds>

### Factfile

- The longest single stage of the race is on day four when competitors must cover 55 miles.
- During the 1994 race, Italian competitor Mauro Prospero lost his way during a sandstorm and wandered alone for nine days, surviving by drinking his own urine and eating bats and snakes.
- The first MdS was in 1986. In the event's history, two competitors have died.

**For more information contact Becky Mulley on 07958 085109 or email [rebecca\\_mulley@hotmail.com](mailto:rebecca_mulley@hotmail.com)**

## The team



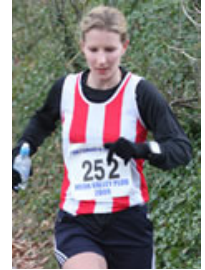
### Jo Kitley

Jo is 29 and works as a neurology doctor at Southampton General Hospital, although she is currently taking time out of clinical medicine to do a PhD in Oxford.

"I've wanted to do the MdS for as long as I can remember, so I was really pleased when I moved to Southampton in 2007 and finally found some friends who were also keen to do it."

### Becky Mulley

Becky, 31, is an environmental scientist for Southampton-based engineering consultancy Gifford. Over the last four years she has undertaken seven marathons, an Ironman triathlon and a swim from the Isle of Wight to the mainland and therefore is fairly used to challenges that other people think can't be done!

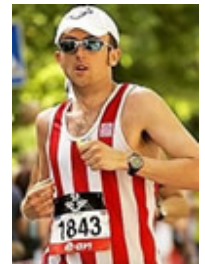


### Trent House

Trent is originally from Tasmania, Australia, but currently lives in Brisbane. He entered the race when he was living in Southampton and is coming back to join his long lost teammates for this challenge. He works as a biomedical scientist. Trent has completed four marathons, but also swims, cycles, and takes part in adventure races.

### Emyr Morgan

Emyr, 39, is originally from Swansea and works as a pharmacist at Southampton General Hospital. He has completed 15 marathons and an Ironman in the last few years, and decided to enter the MdS since it seemed like the next big challenge available. He works at Southampton General Hospital as a Neurosciences Pharmacist, so collecting for Smile4Wessex was a simple decision to make. He is hoping that the group all enjoy the experience of covering 150 miles in one of the most difficult environments on our planet, and that no snakes are encountered!



### Sally Gilbert

Sally is a nurse at Southampton General Hospital. She is 53 and has been running for 7 years but comes from a swimming background. She thought she'd try running after one of her swimming friends ran the London Marathon and then having tried it, found that she loved it and wondered why she'd never run before! To ring the changes, Sally also dabbles in open water swimming and triathlon [including 1 Ironman distance to date]. She also makes excellent apple strudel!

### Kevin Gilbert

Kevin is a handyman who does anything from kitchen/bathroom fitting to garden work. He started running 5 years ago when it dawned on him that he had become a running widower to Sally. To date Kevin has completed 8 marathons with steadily improving performances. He will be 49 when he does the MDS. Kevin and Sally thought the MDS was a mad but exciting prospect and they also feel that the event will be a huge mental challenge, equal to, or perhaps more so, than the physical element.

Kevin and Sally have 2 children in their early 20s who are also fairly active!

