



# Desert trek a marathon effort

By Bridget Brady

IN LESS than two years Beaconsfield's Alex Williams will be battling the hot, dry conditions of the Sahara Desert and participating in what is commonly referred to as the toughest foot race in the world.

Mr Williams will participate in the Marathon de Sables, or Marathon of the Sands, in 2010.

It is a 240km, six day endurance race across the Sahara Desert in Morocco and requires determination and physical and mental strength.

Aside from the 45 degree heat and zero per cent humidity, which Mr Williams said "sucks the water out of you", he will also be fighting another battle that he has lived with for 34 years - Type 1 Diabetes.

"This is not difficult, it's dangerous," Mr Williams said.

"I will need to monitor my blood sugar levels constantly and ask myself, 'how do I feel?'"

"With Type 1 you have to do that to stay alive and to function in society. We live with this burden 24 hours a day."

This is why Mr Williams has given himself two years to prepare for the gruelling event.

He began training in April and has been walking around Pakenham, Officer, Beaconsfield, Berwick and Upper Beaconsfield.

He has built up his walks to about 20km and 25km and is also

carefully increasing the weight of his pack, which he fills with five kilogram bags of rice.

Mr Williams is completing one long walk a week and walks to work every day.

During the event Mr Williams will walk an average of 40km each day.

"My mother's first reaction when I told her I was participating was "Oh my God" and my brother has accepted that I'm nuts."

Mr Williams expects to lose a number of toenails and said he would struggle to walk a couple of days after the event.

"The pure distance of the event means every muscle and joint gets pounded beyond belief."

But Mr Williams is determined to complete the event and hopefully raise some money along the way.

Mr Williams said he wanted to raise money for Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation (JDRF), which was established to find a cure for Type 1 Diabetes.

"Hopefully I can help, even if only by example."

It will cost Mr Williams US\$4000 to enter the event, which does not include the costs for him to make his way to Morocco. He estimates he will need about \$10,000.

Mr Williams said it was also important to raise awareness about Type 1 Diabetes and support young people in particular,

who have just been diagnosed and may be feeling isolated.

Competitors are required to carry everything they need for the event, except water and a tent, in their packs.

Mr Williams said he will need to pack more food than most others in order to keep his blood sugar levels at a healthy level. He has decided dried fruit would be a good choice because is fairly light and gives him good levels of sugar and nutrition.

"I want to do simply everything I can to ensure I'm fit and ready for it."

The course is about 20 per cent sand but Mr Williams said he "fell in love with the desert" when his family spent five years in Saudi Arabia.

He estimates he will need to drink about nine and a half litres of water each day.

"If I cross the line within the allocated time I will be very proud because I've set out to do something and achieved it."

"I'm participating, not competing."

People can follow Mr Williams' journey through his training blog at [http://train2gain.biz/My\\_Sahara\\_Stroll\\_2010/home.html](http://train2gain.biz/My_Sahara_Stroll_2010/home.html) and help him with donations at [http://www.everydayhero.com.au/Alex\\_Williams](http://www.everydayhero.com.au/Alex_Williams).



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Page 2 of 2



**Alex Williams has started training for the Marathon des Sables, a 240km foot race across the Sahara Desert.** 19739

**Picture:**  
**Bridget Brady.**