

News release

Rob has Pole position on Arctic trek



KILLER polar bears, frost bite and crevices are some of the threats facing arctic explorer Rob Phillips when he attempts a pioneering trek to the magnetic North Pole. Hungry polar bears hunt out their prey and circle them for miles before going in for the kill. Rob could also lose toes, fingers or his nose to frostbite. But, with his Army training, he's taking it all in his stride. "It's fine as long as you take the proper precautions," he says.

Rob, 30, who lives in Alderton, is setting off on the 450km trek on Saturday, March 29, and hopes to complete his mission in a month. And if he conquers all the perils and makes it, he'll plant a flag at the North Pole commissioned by Tewkesbury and Pershore solicitors Thomson and Bancks, who are backing him every step of the way after seeing his story in the Gloucestershire Echo. They were so impressed by his venture they decided to give him £500 sponsorship for Help for Heroes and are urging staff and clients to help him raise more.

The expedition is groundbreaking on two fronts. It is the first British mixed team and unsupported attempt. Rob is travelling with 11 other men and women. There will be no back-up vehicles. Each of them will carry everything they need on – 100kg of equipment and supplies on a sled or polk. "You have everything on the polk to see you through to the end," said Rob. The explorers will be armed with shotguns in case polar bears charge through their tents but that's a last resort. "They hunt you out and start circling you for a couple of miles. They're usually inquisitive more than anything else but they want to eat," said Rob. "We have bear bangers and rubber bullets to use when we see them coming in the distance and it normally scares them off," said Rob.

One of the other crippling challenges they face is the sub-zero temperatures. It averages -35C but can plummet to -75C. Many explorers train in refrigerated rooms to get used to the temperatures but Rob's Army service should hold him in good stead. "I spent some time in the mountains in Afghanistan, where it was minus 30 so I know what to expect," he said.

Rob has good reason for embarking on the expedition – he's doing it for Help for Heroes and his friends and comrades. So far he's raised £6,000. "I've had a lot of friends and comrades injured

in the line of duty. Help for Heroes has helped them financially, with kit and adaptations to their homes,” he said.

Rob’s mission struck a chord with Thomson and Bancks, who are spreading the word to help him raise more money for the charity. They are publicizing his trek with a slogan and his sponsorship details on all their documentation. Partner Paul Johnson said: “When we saw the story in the Echo, we were struck by Rob’s bravery and enthusiasm and it is typical of the courage of the servicemen and women he is doing it for. “We’ll be following his mission avidly. We’ve had a flag made and Rob has agreed to carry it. We’ll be so proud and share in his jubilation if he manages to drive it into the ice at the North Pole.”

You can sponsor Rob online by logging on to www.justgiving.com, keying in Robert Phillips, clicking on unsupported North Pole trip and donate or ring Rob on 07810 505029.

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