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Charity challenge produces groundbreaking research

Northumbria experts are hoping to unlock the secrets of fatigue by monitoring the endurance challenge of charity fundraiser Tony 'The Fridge'.

Dr Mick Wilkinson, Senior Lecturer in Physiology of Exercise, will take measurements from Tony Phoenix-Morrison before, during, and after his attempt to run for 24-hours carrying a 42kg fridge on his back.

Baseline measurements of body temperature, hydration, energy balance, and oxygen intake have already been taken from Tony at Northumbria's

Physiology Lab. More data – neuro-muscular, metabolic, dehydration, aspiration, and heart-rate – will be collected during the run from sensors attached to his body, and following the race he will return to the lab for additional tests.

The physiological data will be used by researchers at Northumbria to understand the etiology of fatigue and how the brain and body work together when tackling extreme physical challenges.

Tony, a 49-year-old granddad, will run over 100 miles - the equivalent of almost four marathons – in laps around Newcastle/Gateshead quaysides in a challenge that starts on Friday 19 April at 6pm, finishing at 6pm on Saturday 20 April.

Tony has previously raised over £13,000 for the Sir Bobby Robson Foundation by running 30 consecutive, daily half marathons carrying a fridge. This new challenge was laid down by retailer Appliances Online, who have donated £15,000 to the cancer charity and will provide the fridge for this weekend's run.

Dr Wilkinson hopes that the data collected from Tony will add substantially to knowledge of fatigue and how it impacts the body.

He said: "This type of challenge places extreme pressures on the body to maintain energy balance, body temperature and hydration status. There is also an obvious demand on his muscle tissues to keep producing the force he needs to move forward and stay upright, particularly the legs, and on his central and peripheral nervous system to communicate the drive to run from his brain to his legs.

"Fatigue is inevitable, but the measures Tony has agreed to provide during the run will help us to understand how the brain and body work together to meet the extreme demands he will be placing them under.

"My colleagues Dr Stuart Goodall, Kevin Thomas and I are very much looking forward to being involved in supporting the challenge and uncovering the science behind Tony's extreme feat of endurance."

If Tony is successful, he will set a Guinness World Record for the longest run

completed with a fridge on the runner's back.

He said: "To even carry the fridge for 24 hours isn't easy but to do that and keep running, well, it's going to be a struggle. This challenge is best described as the impossible journey. I'm passionate about raising money for the Sir Bobby Robson Foundation and just hope I can complete this challenge and keep helping the charity. Thinking about that, and the loved ones I've lost to cancer, will be my motivation when it gets really tough on Saturday afternoon."

Dr Wilkinson will be at Newcastle's Quayside throughout Tony's challenge this weekend.

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