

NEWS

On a quest to trek the four most inhospitable places on the planet

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SINGAPORE — His plans were to brave the grueling conditions of the South Pole to raise funds for charity.

However, the biggest challenge for life coach Thaddeus Lawrence came even before the race began.

When the 37-year-old set sail for Antarctica from Argentina on November 17, he suffered severe seasickness when the ship passed through the Drake Passage — the body of water between the southern tip of South America at Cape Horn, Chile and the South Shetland Islands of Antarctica.

The stretch, which is open water for hundreds of kilometres, is beset by high waves and strong winds.

"I spent most of the journey in my cabin, throwing up," recounted Mr Lawrence, who returned to Singapore on Nov 27.

"On the night before the race, the doctors got increasingly worried about my weak state and decided to put me on an IV drip ... I was administered 2 litres of saline plus sugar and anti-nausea medication so that I could at least make it to the start line," he said.

Mr Lawrence did complete his task:

Through hell and high water

Mr Thaddeus Lawrence took part in a week-long open trek in Antarctica last month. PICTURE COURTESY OF THADDEUS LAWRENCE.

Treking for 250km in the coldest place on Earth to raise more than \$100,000 to help pay for the educational needs and life skill development programmes for disadvantaged youth at The Salvation Army Gracehaven.

Mr Lawrence has also completed two other tough races — a trek through the Sahara in Egypt last year and a run through the Gobi desert in China in June — so qualify for the Antarctica race, which is held once

every two years.

For the Antarctica event, Mr Lawrence managed to secure \$25,000 in cash sponsorship from companies including chain store Pet Lovers Centre, bathroom fixtures maker Hanoglobe and healthcare company Wen Kim.

He also spent about \$3,000 of his own money to head to Argentina early to prepare for the race.

His latest adventure in sub-zero

temperatures was also his toughest yet. The organisers were prepared to evacuate any of the 55 competitors from 23 countries back to the ship in the event of difficulties.

As a safety precaution, the participants were put through a racing route that was laid out in a loop so officials could keep a constant eye on them.

This meant that they ran several loops over the course of several hours, which was "mind-numbingly dull and a huge mental challenge", he added.

"But this also gave me the perfect opportunity to discover my mental and emotional patterns and put to use the psychological and mental techniques that I teach in my workshops," said the bachelor.

Now, Mr Lawrence can lay claim to being the second Singaporean to complete a race through the Antarctica — hedge fund manager Lew Kah Shin did it in 2008.

In March, Mr Lawrence will join the last race in the series, through the Atacama Desert in Chile.

When he gets through that race, he will be among a select group of individuals who would have successfully completed all four, 250km, self-supported footraces across the hottest, coldest, windiest and driest places on Earth.

When asked why he did it, he said: "I use these races to recharge and reinvigorate myself ... if I can take these on and succeed then most of life's challenges pale in comparison."

VOICES

