

SPORTING HEROES



# Marathon duo raise €150,000 for charity

David Lyle and Harold McGuinness have run, cycled, and climbed their way to the peak of endurance, writes **Sheila O'Kelly**

**D**avid Lyle and his friend Harold McGuinness have raised €150,000 from their sporting marathons since 1997 – and €40,000 of that was in the last year.

David and Caroline Lyle's daughter, 20-year-old Nicola, has diabetes and the Diabetes Federation of Ire-

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David Lyle, left, and Harold McGuinness present a cheque for €6,200 to May McConnell of the Diabetes Federation of Ireland North West branch

land is one of the five charities to benefit from David's and Harold's feats of endurance. The Lyle family lives in Moville, Co Donegal.

David and Harold set themselves their latest challenge in April 2004 when they mapped out five events that they were determined to complete by April this year. And complete them they did.

- April 2004: the London Marathon
- June 2004: 200-mile cycle in two days along the Irish border
- October 2004: 530-mile cycle from San Francisco to Los Angeles in six days
- October 2004 (three days later!): the New York Marathon
- April 2005: the Marathon De Sables in Morocco.

"The Marathon De Sables is regarded as the toughest foot race in the world," says David. "It goes across the Sahara desert. We carried all our gear on our back, apart from water, which was carried for us. We averaged 20 miles a day. The temperature was 50-55 degrees and no humidity."

David and Harold started their running careers in 1996. They had been friends for years, were 36 and 40 years old respectively and were a

bit concerned that they were getting out of shape.

"In the pub one night someone set us a challenge of running a marathon. So we started a six-month training programme done out for us by one of our friends," says David.

"The first night he told us to run five minutes away from the house and five minutes back. We thought he was joking, but then we realised it was going to be a bit tougher than we expected, but we were determined to build it up."

David and Harold went running whenever they got the chance, which wasn't easy because they both work long hours. David drives fuel tankers and Harold is an architect.

"The hardest part of training is getting toggged out," said David.

The Derry Marathon in April 1997 was their first major race. In October 1997 they ran the Dublin Marathon and they have averaged two marathons each a year since.

In November 2000, they ran 100 miles through the Himalayan Mountains in five days. "We went up 13,500ft – the altitude above 7,000ft was difficult to cope with. We ran

the flattest parts and power-walked the rest."

The other four charities to benefit from their dedication are Co-operation Ireland; the Romanian Children's Fund (they help a local Donegal builder who gives up his time every year to build orphanages); Our Lady's Hospital for Sick Children in Dublin; and the Foyle Hospital in Derry.

#### Adapting to life with diabetes

David and Caroline Lyle's daughter Nicola was diagnosed with diabetes five years ago when she was 15. The couple noticed Caroline's typical symptoms of weight loss and thirst when they were on holidays in Scotland.

"The doctor said it was either anorexia nervosa or diabetes – and diabetes would be a better diagnosis," said David.

Nicola did not find it too difficult to adapt, partly because the family were always health conscious and rarely ate junk food. It was a bit more difficult as Nicola grew older and began going out with her friends and having the occasional drink.

Nicola is now studying English and Media Studies in Coleraine University and boarding in Portstewart where there is a diabetes clinic at the end of the road.

"She is away at college now and we are sometimes anxious about whether she is looking after herself properly and keeping her medical appointments. But you can't eat and sleep for them – she has to look after it now and that's it," said David.

A sentiment many parents will identify with, but if Nicola has half the determination that her father has, she is sure to take living with diabetes in her stride.