

A MAN FOR ALL SEASONS

Mark Hines is probably Britain's fittest academic. As an ultra-runner, the exercise physiologist has conquered deserts, jungles and Arctic terrain – so if you want to perform your best in extreme conditions, he's the man to ask

Words Mark Bailey Picture Yann Besrest-Butler

"I LOVE ULTRA-RACING because it's a way of experiencing the world in a new and adventurous way," explains Mark Hines, an exercise physiologist who has run through some of the most challenging and spectacular landscapes on Earth.

Earlier this year, after a nine-and-a-half-day slog, Hines became the first man to complete the Yukon Arctic Ultra for the third time. It's a 740km race through the frozen Canadian Arctic in temperatures of minus 40°. He has previously run the Marathon des Sables (a six-day, 251km ultra-marathon in the Sahara Desert in scorching 50° heat) and the Jungle Marathon (a 254km race in the sweltering 99% humidity of the Brazilian Amazon). In 2014 he hopes to adapt the fast-and-light approach of ultra-running to polar exploration by completing a 3,200km journey from Barrow in Alaska to the Pole of

Inaccessibility, the Magnetic North Pole and the Geographic North Pole. "For me, the fun comes from the incredible scenery, the sense of achievement and knowing my body so well," says Hines, 34. "Running becomes a way to explore the world and yourself."

Hines trains in the more temperate environs of Surrey, and only ran his first race in 2005. But what makes him unique is that his own experiences of shivering and sweating are informed and enhanced by a rigorous understanding of the human body. A lecturer on human physiology, he is researching a PhD in biomechanics and neuromuscular physiology at Roehampton University. He has written books on the subject (visit markhines.org for details), and over the coming pages he reveals how you too can perform to your best in even the harshest temperatures.

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From the Yukon to the Amazon, Mark Hines has raced the lot

