in annual Death Race

MATT JOHNSON
sjsports@uvsj.com

SUBMITTED PHOTO

Alex Spencer is shown with his wife, Sarah.

IDAHO FALLS – Some people want to go to the beach for their summer vacation. Some people want to tour the country. Some just want to relax at home.

Alex Spencer wants to compete in a Death Race.

Spencer, 27, is preparing to race in the 2014 Spartan Death Race in Pittsfield, Vt., this June.

Spencer, who was born and raised in Rexburg and now resides in Idaho Falls, plans to compete in the grueling race for several reasons.

"It's how my older brother and I stay in touch," Spencer said. "The second reason is it's always fun to push myself to the limit to see, okay, what can I do? How far can I go? This is one of those races that is pretty famous for breaking its contestants so I figured, why not give it a shot?"

The race, which is part of a series of races put on by Peak Races, is indeed capable of breaking even the strongest of athletes. According to the official race website, the obstacle and challenge-driven race requires competitors to complete numerous grueling mental and physical challenges throughout a 40-mile course that runs through the Vermont woods.

During the Death Race, competitors may be asked to chop wood for hours or complete grueling hikes with rocks and weighted packs. Or after 24-hours of racing, they may be asked to memorize a Bible verse, hike to the top of a mountain and recite them back in order — miss a word and you get to do it all over again.

Many of the participants aren't able to finish the race. Only 10 percent do, according to the organization.

Spencer is preparing himself through some interesting training methods.

One of those methods is waking up over a 24-hour period every hour on the hour and running as far as he can during a 10 minute period. Then he comes back, reads a page of a book, and writes down what he read. That way, he is training himself mentally and physically to endure fatigue in both areas.

Having a strength base is important for participating in the race, as well. Many times, participants have had to carry heavy objects. Spencer is working at carrying weights. He's also doing training exercises that would prepare him to run a marathon.

While participating in the race is something Spencer looks forward to, spending time with his older brother is probably his greatest reward. His brother, Vincent, who is six years older and lives in Kansas, is someone Spencer has always looked up to.

"He's very much physically fit. He's a personal trainer. He and his wife own their own CrossFit gym. They love doing these kinds of things. So one of the ways I can connect with my at the same time, also fostering that brother relationship," Spencer said.

The brothers have competed in events like this before, so this is a chance to further increase their bond.

"This isn't the first time we've done something similar. In the past, we've met up and done an adventure race down in Missouri similar to this but not as extreme."

Spencer feels the relationship with his brother is important. However, he doesn't want to alienate other family members and friends while training for this race. Spencer, who is a recreation therapist in Idaho Falls, says those closest to him have mainly been supportive.

"They're all pretty encouraging," Spencer said. "They'll ask about training, you know, find out about what I'm doing."

"So that's been really awesome. I haven't had anyone say 'you're crazy,' except my wife. My wife has said that," Spencer joked.

Crazy or not, he will be participating in the race in a few of months.

If you are interested in participating in a Peak race, visit www.spartanrace.com. For more informa-