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For Immediate Release

Brothers Set Endurance World Record:
Complete 8 Desert Races in Single Year

Contact: Tracie Phan, Phan & Co. trasiiephan@icloud.com 619-252-8348

LAPLAND, SWEDEN – To set a world record that is going to test every ounce of your physical limits and mental stamina, you need your brother at your side. At least, that’s the successful strategy employed by two ultra-athlete brothers from Toronto, Canada, [Eric Chan](#), 40, and [Paul Chan](#), 42. They’ve been traveling the world for the past 10 months, running side by side across some of the most inhospitable terrain on earth. Together, they’ve raced 1142 miles (1838 kilometers.) Together, they’ve suffered blisters, despair, sickness and hunger. But now, after completing a 143-mile-long (230-kilometer) final run across a frigid desert landscape in northern Sweden, they can claim the Guinness World Record for Most Desert Races Run in One Year. Together.

Under the banner “Eight Deserts Challenge,” the two set out in April of 2016 to test themselves “against the toughest deserts on the planet.” Their odyssey began in southern Morocco, where they ran the [Marathon Des Sables](#), a six-day, 156-mile (250-kilometer) crossing of the Sahara Desert. And it ended Tuesday—with a world record flourish—at the opposite temperature extreme in the Arctic desert of northern Sweden. Although many of their friends originally expressed doubt about the globe-trotting endurance feat, Eric says it was all about “living your life without regrets.” In an interview with [RunUltra](#), an on-line magazine dedicated to ultra-running events, he said “this project is about overcoming incredible odds, living the adventure and telling your grandkids about it when you get old.”

Neither of the two was experienced in desert racing. Although Eric had been an experienced marathoner of eight years and a running coach prior to the record attempt, his brother, Paul, had only been running for one. So Eric coached his brother on proper running technique and trained alongside him. Together they traveled to Joshua Tree National Park in southern California for conditioning in a desert climate. They pored over the many desert running events held around the globe and put together a slate of eight difficult ones, each presenting a unique test. The [Gobi March](#) (Gobi Desert) would be the windiest, the [Atacama Crossing](#) (Atacama Desert) the driest. [Oman Desert Marathon](#) (Omani Desert,) the sandiest, [Marathon des Sables](#) (Sahara Desert - Morocco,) the hottest, and [Sahara Race](#) (Namib Desert,) with the highest dunes [Canal-Aventure / The Official Page Ultra Bolivia](#), held at 13,500 feet, was at the greatest elevation and crossed the largest salt desert in the world. The [Trans-Pecos Ultra](#) (Chihuahuan Desert) in western Texas was the most hostile—think: rattlesnakes, scorpions and tarantulas—and [Beyond the Ultimate Race Series Ice Ultra](#), in Arctic Sweden, was the coldest, with daytime high temperatures often failing to reach zero Celsius.

To make those challenges even more difficult, several of the races were scheduled close together, allowing little recovery time. During one six-week period in autumn, for example, they’d have to run four different races on three different continents and traverse many, many time zones. Undaunted, they packed their bags and hopped on an airplane.

Their first test was the Marathon des Sables across the Sahara, billed as The Toughest Footrace on Earth by Discovery Channel. After completing that event, Paul recalled in his interview, “We were quite beaten up both mentally and physically. [It] gave us confidence but scared us in terms of the kind of suffering we had to endure for the next seven races.”

Relying on their mental and physical training and a vegetarian diet—both are certified holistic nutritionists—and keeping an eye on the standing world record, they traveled to Namibia for their next race. The record the two were chasing had been set by Sandy McCallum, also a Canadian, who completed six desert races between May 2006 and March 2007.

One by one, they ticked off the desert ultra-runs, living out of backpacks and rarely getting time to rest and recover. They lost weight, battled dehydration and nausea, and injuries from spills. And then, the final week of February, they found themselves inside the Arctic Circle, facing their last—and coldest—desert run.

“There were a couple of close calls,” Eric says, “but we made it out.” Temperatures ranged from below zero to the mid-teens but with hurricane-like crosswinds, the air felt much icier. Paul experienced freeze burns and mild hypothermia but not the severe frostbite that caused another top contender to drop out. From the original field of 26 competitors, only 16 finished. They celebrated the completion of their record-setting eighth desert run with vegetarian lasagna, local beer and some red wine.

“The impossible is possible,” Eric says. “We just had to put some faith in ourselves.”

Not only did the Chan brothers set a new world record, they raised approximately \$4,000 to date for [Rainforest Trust](#), a charity dedicated to the protection of threatened rainforests and endangered wildlife. It’s a passion they adopted while visiting the Amazon River in Peru in 2014.

After pushing their bodies to their limits for the better part of a year, the Chan brothers might be expected to take a well-deserved break. And they will, in a sense that only ultra-athletes of their caliber can understand. They’ll be flying to the Canary Islands in Spain to re-calibrate their training for their next record-setting event. “I promised Paul that we would run the 121st edition of the [Boston Marathon](#) in April,” Eric says. “I will be running alongside him with the objective of punctuating our year-long journey by giving him a ‘personal best’ time at the race.” That’s exactly what brothers are for.

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About Eric and Paul Chan

For more information about Eric and Paul Chan and the Eight Deserts Challenge, please visit <https://perfectstriderunning.com/>.