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Watson takes on the extreme world

Derby's Gill Watson is aiming to become one of her sport's elite, competing at the highest international level.

The XPD challenge will take Gill to the summit of Portugal's highest mountain

The 44-year-old is about to take a shot at November's Adventure Race World Championship in Portugal.

She'll be part of a team of four in the gruelling 900-kilometre event combining cycling, rollerblading, kayaking, orienteering, running and more.

The race, through some of Portugal's most spectacular landscape, will take around 110 hours to complete.

Gill's previous attempt at becoming a world champion ended in disappointment after one of her team mates picked up a knee injury, though in the 2007 event her team finished a very respectable fifth.

This year, Gill, from Chellaston, is in a team that includes fellow Brit Russell Ladkin, Switzerland's Bernhard Hug and Portuguese adventure racer Antonio Figuerido.

The 900 kilometres will be the longest event she has taken part in and includes an ascent of Portugal's highest mountain. But she remains undaunted at the prospect: "It's about endurance and tactical know-how.

"We'll take it stage by stage, break it down into manageable sections and see how strong we are at the end. It'll soon pass!"

So do you train and prepare for such an event? Gill, a fitness instructor, says: "You can't really train for it - you've just got to be strong.

"I've upped my training in the gym recently and put in a few long races, including a 20-mile fell race.

"And you can't plan too much. The schedule says we're

"And I'm desperate for a new bike at the moment - though, somehow, I'll manage."

"Is it worth it? Definitely! I love it! It's fantastic taking part and meeting so many people from all over the world. It's a great atmosphere.

"And this year we'll be wearing GPS trackers so people can follow our progress."

Gill has competed in several endurance races to prepare for the XPD

But at the end of it all there's still no rest: "You have to pack up and get out... so I guess my next proper sleep will be on the plane home."

After Portugal, Gill's next racing adventures will take her to Abu Dhabi in December and Patagonia in February 2010.

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