"There isn't a day that goes by, or an hour that goes by, where I don't pick up my BlackBerry smartphone and use it for something. I just can't put it down."

Neall Hards, Tough Mudder Participant

Fast Facts:

- BlackBerry® smartphone user since 1999
- Leverages GPS functionality on BlackBerry smartphone and the runtastic PRO application by runtastic GmbH, to measure training and obstacle course progress
- Benefits from durability of BlackBerry smartphone
- Enjoys using BlackBerry® Messenger (BBM™) to communicate with fellow competitors

BlackBerry Customer Success Story - Neall Hards

One Tough Mudder: BlackBerry Helps Ready Competitor for Grueling Race

Swimming under submerged wooden planks in ice-cold water. Sprinting up a quarter-pipe covered in mud. Swinging on greased monkey bars while trying to prevent falling into an icy pond below.

For many, this series of tasks sounds like a modern-day nightmare. For 36-year-old Neall Hards, however, they represent just three of the many obstacles he might face during his first 'World's Toughest Mudder' challenge this November, a grueling 24-hour course that the Ottawa resident has been preparing for over the past two years.

"The course is designed by British Special Forces and is designed to drain every last bit of drive and desire you have in your mind," said the father of three. "It's dark, it's cold and you're alone for hours at a time."

To succeed in these 24-to-48 hour long endurance races held in countries worldwide, participants like Hards require intense physical and mental strength, unwavering motivation and rigorous training. As Hards has learned, though, these attributes can also be boosted by having a constant companion: in his case, a BlackBerry smartphone.

Hards has been a BlackBerry smartphone user since 1999. From a business perspective, he has long benefited from features like mobile email access, calendar integration and enterprise security.

But it wasn't until the spring of 2011 that the longtime runner decided to use his BlackBerry smartphone to help measure his training progress. Hards purchased the runtastic PRO application through BlackBerry App World™, which leverages his BlackBerry smartphone's GPS functionality to track his running distances, kilometer paces and time averages.

Hards straps his BlackBerry smartphone to his arm and uses a voice feature on the application that 'shouts' updates on his progress. The immediate feedback is instrumental for Hards to help pace himself, especially during long courses.

"The runtastic app on my BlackBerry smartphone acts as a coach and as a running mate," said Hards. "Whether it tells me that I'm running at a great pace or that I'm lagging, the constant flow of information motivates me to push even harder."

Whether training or participating in actual qualifying events, Hards benefits from the fact that family and friends can log onto his online runtastic profile and track his progress. As the minutes and kilometres multiply, Hards is buoyed by cheers of encouragement people send directly to his BlackBerry smartphone in near real-time.

Hards prefers his BlackBerry smartphone to other training and measurement devices because it allows him to give his undivided attention to the course ahead of him. It has also proved to be remarkably durable, despite exposure to extreme environments.

"All I need is a waterproof bag and my backpack," said Hards. "My BlackBerry smartphone swims with me, rolls around with me and gets muddy with me, and I've never had any issues."

As a family man, business professional and race competitor, Hards leverages his BlackBerry smartphone throughout the day. Whether using BBM to organize training with fellow Tough Mudder participants, syncing calendars with his 15-year-old daughter or using the GPS feature to find his son's football games, Hards appreciates the full functionality that his BlackBerry solution offers.

"There isn't a day that goes by, or an hour that goes by, where I don't pick up my BlackBerry smartphone and use it for something," said Hards. "I just can't put it down."