

“My Story And How I Ended Up Running At Dorridge,” By David



“My Name is David, I am 31 years old and an A+E Doctor from Yorkshire. I live with my parents in Barnsley, though at the time of this incident I lived north of Leeds. Most importantly, I am a Twin, and my Twin Brother is called Martin. On Sunday, 21 February 2010, my life suddenly stopped after a phone call that changed the very fabric of my family.

“I was doing an extra shift in an A+E unit in Halifax, as a favour for a friend, on a day when the North of England was subjected to a snow storm. It was a call from my Twin Brother's partner saying that Martin had been severely injured in Afghanistan. Martin, my beloved Twin and Best Friend, was a Captain in 1st Battalion, The Royal Anglian Regiment, and he had been deployed to Afghanistan in November 2009.

“I last saw my Twin on our 31st Birthday on the 31 January 2010, whilst he was on his R+R break, a few days after our Auntie's funeral. Upon hearing the news of Martin's injury I had to get to my family home. After battling to get back, which involved running 8 miles after my car got stuck in the snow, I was able to comfort my parents, but also able to speak with some of the medical team over in Afghanistan. It was then that the true extent of his injuries was made known. How do you tell your parents that your Twin Brother is critically ill with horrific injuries and how do you comfort the Partner of your Twin brother on the phone, when she lives in South Wales? I was just grateful that we had a number of military officers with us at home and with Martin's Partner in South Wales.

“We all went down on the Sunday to Birmingham's Selly Oak Hospital, thankfully under the guidance of a Casualty Visiting Officer from Martin's Battalion, and were then put up in some emergency accommodation made available by the St John's and Red Cross Defence Medical Welfare Service based at the military wing of the Hospital. We had to

wait 36hrs before Martin was flown to Birmingham but, before we were able to see him, we had to listen to the RAF medical transfer team give a full description of his injuries. It was a most horrendous time for us in that room. Even the Team who had flown Martin over were in tears. Being a medic I felt so helpless, yet had to be there to support Martin as his Twin and had to support our family and Martin's Partner.

“We spent 21 days with Martin in the Critical Care Unit (Intensive Care ward) where he fought valiantly for his life. Each day would bring about a different complication. And each day we would all camp in the small waiting room taking our turns to visit Martin during the visiting hours along with the other families of injured servicemen. There were probably 10 days where we were told to expect the worst, and each time Martin fought to live another day. Those days make you really feel fear, a sensation that I cannot explain. Each of those times we would all go up to the Hospital Chapel and Pray. Pray for Gods support to help Martin, Pray for strength for the medical teams, and Pray for the other servicemen and women out in Afghanistan. We were very fortunate since we had Martin's Battalion Padre visiting most days, the hospital chaplains, and the Defence Medical chaplain, with us. But not forgetting the numerous medical and surgical staff who were working so hard together to help Martin. They too gave us much strength and support.

“During the last week we were moved to a SSAFA Forces Help charity house a few miles away, which was a lovely house where other families stayed, and had more disabled facilities for our Mother. Unfortunately, every time we tried to stay there we were called back to the hospital as Martin was becoming more sick and so we would return to the emergency accommodation rooms in the Military wing of the hospital. Each time we would be supported by the St John's and Red Cross Defence Medical Welfare Service support staff and were given a new wash kit and T-shirt donated by Troop Aid. For us it was a gift which allowed us to keep ourselves refreshed in the midst of absolute turmoil. When you have been so upset and stressed all day, all you want to do is have a wash and stay clean. But we were unable to travel a few miles to our new accommodation as Martin was too ill for us to leave the hospital grounds.

“On the 15 March, after a day where it was touch and go, the medical teams decided that Martin had passed the point of no return and we agreed that the most appropriate action to do to preserve his dignity was to turn off life support machines. He died at eleven minutes past eleven in the evening. We had seen over the last 21 days the medical teams tirelessly working over Martin, actions which we are so grateful for. The staff treated Martin as if they were treating someone in their own family, but most importantly they treated him in a manner which I would have wanted to treat him; with dignity, respect and kindness. I have nothing but praise for everyone who helped Martin and ourselves.

“From a personal perspective, having worked in a busy Intensive Care unit in Australia, I had never seen anyone as poorly as my Twin Brother Martin, but equally I have never

seen someone fight so hard to be with his family. Martin always told us he would come home and he did. Those 21 days with Martin were the hardest days of my life and I am sure the hardest days for my elderly Parents and Martin's Partner, but equally by the grace of God, they were 21 days where we were all together with Martin. I just wish it had been for longer.

“As you read this, some of you may feel upset, some may find it too hard to read but this is reality and it happened to my family, it happened to my Twin Brother. As I write this I am still trying to come to terms with his loss. We have had his funeral, and various memorial services, but it still feels like a bad dream. Each night I continue to pray for God to look after Martin and my family, and to ask for strength to help re-build my life so I can one day help injured servicemen or women like those who helped Martin.

“You may ask how this is all related to the Dorridge Fun Run. Well, I don't think I could explain things without giving you a brief detail as to what has happened to my family. The Dorridge Fun Run came about through the God-son of one of your Church Members. Robert has been a close friend for many years, going to the same school as both of us and then on to University with Martin. One of the days where he and his wife were supporting us in the days after Martin had died, he mentioned that there was a small fun run nearby and that it may be a nice event to bring the family to. Robert, being a close friend, knew that I was a pretty serious athlete and that at present was running primarily as a break from all of the mental turmoil that has followed. As with most things at present, I only remembered the date a few days before the actual run.

“For me to run was ideal as I could run and then see a close family friend afterwards. To then realize that Troop Aid was one of the main charities made things more important. The Troop Aid wash kits and T-shirts we received during our time at hospital made the darkest of days a little bit lighter, something which is hard to describe but greatly appreciated. It was because of this that I decided to put a photograph of Martin on the front of a Troop Aid T shirt and the writing, ' In memory of my Twin Brother - Martin.' Troop Aid made our life in Selly Oak Hospital a little bit easier. Words cannot fully express how I felt then and how I feel now, but all I know is that I wouldn't wish what has happened to our family on any other family. I just wish it never happened to us.

“The actual Fun Run was a day where we had a little break from the hardship at home. It gave us all a break. For me it was a time where I could grind out a good 8 miles in a picturesque part of England and on a course which was better marshalled and organised than many big city races I have done in the past. Whilst running I am comforted in the fact I can concentrate on thinking of my Twin Brother, whilst my parents can enjoy the craft stalls laid out next to the church. As with most runs you invariably can find yourself alone, but it was nice to run alongside young children and families on their bikes and this urged

you on when your legs were tiring. Most importantly, as it was a Sunday, we were able to attend the small service and prayers said by Duncan shortly after the race.

“For me the Dorridge Fun Run gave me time to escape, and have a nice day out in the company of others. Would I return again? Yes if work permits. Is it an important event? Yes, especially if there is a charity such as Troop Aid involved. Support for our Armed Forces is very important. They are making a difference in Afghanistan, with children returning to schools and security being improved, but it is at a cost and our family has paid the highest price. I do hope people never forget the sacrifices people have made for this country. We are very fortunate here in Britain, but others are not and the Armed Forces are trying to make a difference. What more can you expect from people?”

“Thank You.”

David