



Survivor story



Alex Davis, 28, West Midlands

Sudden cardiac arrest struck PE teacher and keen athlete Alex Davis at the peak of his physical fitness.

Alex was on a high after scoring a try playing in a rugby match when he suddenly felt very unwell.

The 28-year-old, who suffers from the heart rhythm disorder, Wolff-Parkinson-White syndrome, had severe palpitations and an abnormal heart rate and was taken to hospital.

While there he suffered a sudden cardiac arrest. His heart was stopped for around five minutes before he was resuscitated.

After surgery to his heart Alex has gone from strength to strength and he is now determined to raise awareness of the UK's biggest killer - sudden cardiac arrest.



Things couldn't have been much better for Alex Davis as he planted a try for his rugby team after being on the pitch for just one minute on a cold January morning in 2012.

But a moment of elation quickly turned to concern as Alex suddenly began to feel very unwell.

"It was bizarre," says Alex.

“I had been on the pitch about a minute when I scored the try and then I suddenly just felt really off. I could feel my heart was pounding in my chest and I felt really dizzy.”

Having already been diagnosed with the heart rhythm disorder, Wolff-Parkinson-White syndrome, which causes there to be an abnormal electrical pathway in the heart, Alex knew immediately something was wrong.

He took himself out of the game and tried unsuccessfully to get his heart rate back to normal.

***‘I could feel my heart
pounding in my chest’***

“I just knew something wasn’t right and I had to do something straight away so I went home to rest. My heart rate had always returned to normal in the past but this time it didn’t. Thankfully my neighbour was around to take me to hospital.

“They examined me and took me straight into the resuscitation room and it was there I had a sudden cardiac arrest. I am very lucky I was in the right place when it happened.

“My heart was stopped for around five minutes but thankfully a defibrillator was used on me and I was resuscitated.

“Though I knew about my condition it still came out of the blue for me and it was a shock. You realise how this can happen at any time and it is scary when it does.”

His experience has made Alex, also a keen footballer and cricketer, determined to raise awareness of sudden cardiac arrest and to raise funds for Arrhythmia Alliance’s Hearts & Goals campaign which aims to place defibrillators in public places.

His efforts to increase awareness about AEDs and CPR have already started with pupils at Bishop Vesey’s School, in Sutton Coldfield, where he is head of year.

And the youngsters are also supporting Alex’s plans to run the Paris Marathon and climb Mount Kilimanjaro next year.

Alex continued: “I was one of the lucky ones and I was in a hospital where a defibrillator could be used on me immediately but many others aren’t as fortunate.

***‘I was one of the lucky
ones, many others
aren’t as fortunate’***

“Having a defibrillator administered within five minutes can give someone a 50% chance of survival and a second opportunity at living their life. But in so many instances this unfortunately isn’t the case and most people who are lucky enough to receive CPR have only a 5% chance of survival.

“From personal experience I know of two people who have had someone very close taken away from them as a result of a sudden cardiac arrest. With greater awareness and access to defibrillators this is something that will help prevent other families and friends from losing loved ones in such tragic circumstances.

‘This can happen to anyone at any time’

“This can happen to anyone, at any time, regardless of age or fitness. That’s why it is so important these devices are on hand to save people.”

Alex’s recovery is now almost complete.

“It did shake my confidence and I have been rebuilding it since it happened.

“But I have had surgery to correct my heart and I’m learning to trust my body again.

“Training is going really well in preparation for Paris and I am feeling confident.”

Visit www.justgiving.com/alexavisendurancechallenges2013 to sponsor Alex.