



Alex with local SA community members and HTC and HFA staff in 2012
Photo:HFA

COMPETING IN THE SPORT YOU LOVE

Alex Dowsett's trip to Australia to compete in the Tour Down Under in South Australia and the Cadel Evans Great Ocean Road cycling races this January was a great opportunity for some young Australians to catch up with Alex and talk about haemophilia, sport and following your dreams.

Alex is a young man from the United Kingdom with severe haemophilia A who is an elite cyclist and is an ambassador for the haemophilia community internationally. In 2012 he appeared on the UK television program **Embarrassing bodies** talking about haemophilia and how he manages his cycling career (Series 5, Episode 3). He is now part of the Little Bleeders team, a UK charity that raises awareness about haemophilia, young people and sport. You can read Alex's story on the Little Bleeders website - <http://www.littlebleeders.com/alexs-story>

After his first ride in the Tour Down Under in 2012, Alex met with the local haemophilia community in South Australia and inspired the HTC team at the Royal Adelaide Hospital to set up Team.Factor for the Challenge Tour.

After competing in Race Melbourne at Albert Park, Alex took time out from his busy training schedule to meet up and have a chat with the Donaldson family from Victoria, particularly with their son Will, who has haemophilia and is a keen surfer. Reflecting on this experience, both the Donaldsons and Alex felt that there was much to learn from each other.

Alex Dowsett commented:

'This today has made my whole trip, meeting young Will, an 11-year-old surfer from near Torquay, Victoria. Like me he's also got severe haemophilia A, and I guess also like me it's clearly not stopping him competing in the sport he loves.

Haemophilia has come such a long way in such a small space of time. If I was born 5-10 years earlier it would've been a different story for me, and haemophiliacs born later and later have such bright prospects, which is incredible to see.

It's the stories and examples like Will that let others know their youngster with haemophilia won't be restricted in their life ahead and sends a message that they will grow up with the same opportunities to lead as normal lives as possible with a condition that was once hugely debilitating - and that's all any parent wants for their kid, equal opportunities.'

Karen Donaldson, Will's mother, spoke afterwards about their meeting:

'We have been very fortunate to meet this incredible human who has inspired many people including kids with haemophilia. To reach the top level of their sport with a condition we know is difficult to manage at the best of times is such an incredible achievement. Thank you, Alex Dowsett, for stealing some of your time and for encouraging Will to drive forward in sport and conquer to the best of his ability, despite having haemophilia. I hope you heard us cheering loudly at the Bell's Beach climb!'

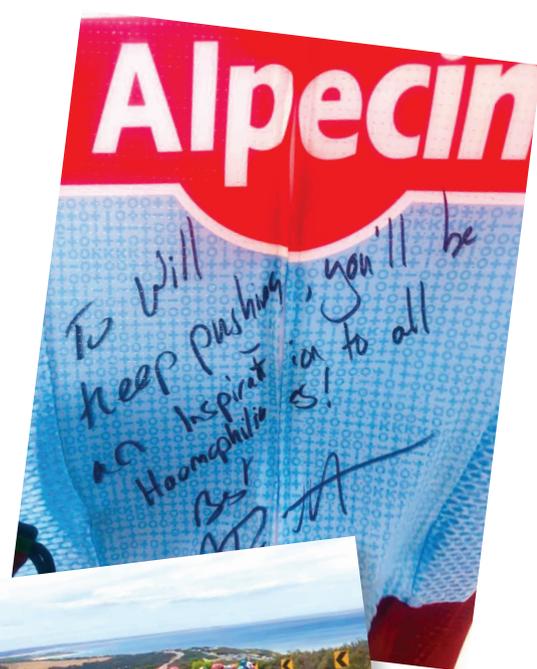
'I enjoyed the connection and interest Alex had with Will when they met up.'

'They discussed the frequency of prophylaxis, the issues associated with self-infusions, target joints and how to combat rigorous training with the important timing of factor administration.'

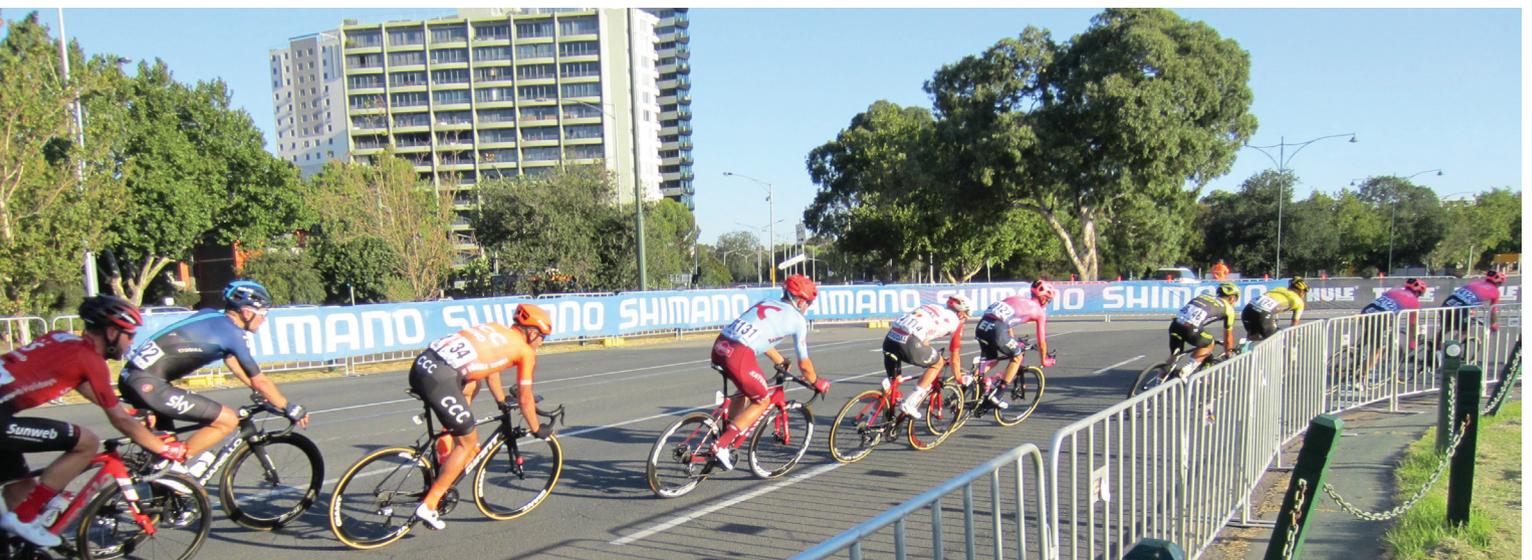
It seems kids with haemophilia do tend to grow up quickly, as Alex suggested. It's not often you would have such mature discussions with an 11-year-old.

What a positive and humble person Alex is. To give up his time to have a meaningful discussion with a local 11-year-old boy is something pretty special.'

Our thanks to the Donaldson Family and Alex Dowsett for permission to publish their story, photos and posts from Facebook. 🏠



Will Donaldson and Alex Dowsett catching up along the Great Ocean Road
Photos: Karen Donaldson



Alex (number 131) in Race Melbourne
Photo: HFA