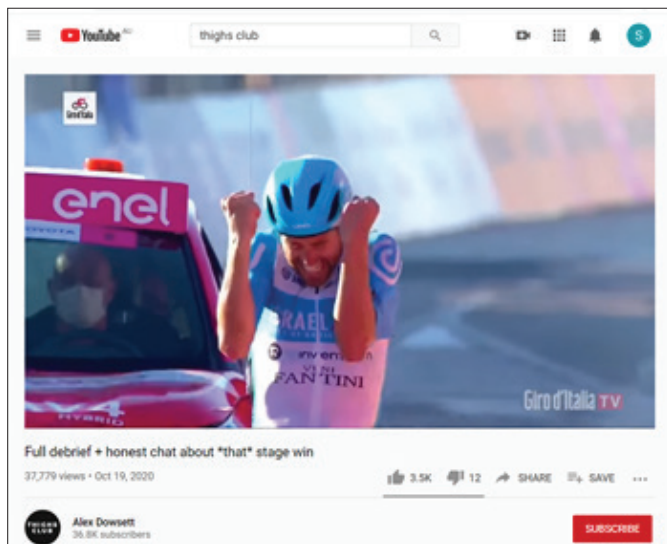


ALEX DOWSETT CYCLING WIN

Bleeding Disorders Awareness Week was a time for exciting and extraordinary events - and one of these was the news about Alex Dowsett's amazing victory in Stage 8 of the Giro D'Italia cycling race.



Alex is an elite cyclist from the United Kingdom with severe haemophilia A. You may remember him from his trips to Australia to compete in the Tour Down Under in South Australia and the Cadel Evans Great Ocean Road cycling races. This year he has been cycling professionally with the team Israel Start-Up Nation. After an injury knocked him out of the Tour de France in July, he made a great return for the prestigious Giro D'Italia race in October 2020 – and went on to an astounding solo win of Stage 8, way ahead of the pack. It had been a hard year for Alex, and with uncertainty about his employment for next year and a baby on the way in January 2021, Alex said it was just the break he needed.

INTERNATIONAL HAEMOPHILIA AMBASSADOR

Alex is well-known as an ambassador for the haemophilia internationally. He is not afraid to talk about his haemophilia or how he manages his treatment and his cycling career. In 2012 he appeared on the UK television program *Embarrassing Bodies* (Series 5, Episode 3). He is a leading part of the Little Bleeders team, a UK charity that raises awareness about haemophilia and encourages young people with haemophilia to be active and participate in sport. Alex also has a YouTube channel, Thighs Club, where he shares his cycling experiences and tips, along with updates on his haemophilia story and young people with haemophilia who have inspired him.

GROWING UP WITH HAEMOPHILIA

On the Little Bleeders website, both Alex and his parents give their versions of his story – from a traumatic diagnosis as a baby with no family history, growing up with prophylaxis treatment and regular stints on crutches, swimming to improve his strength as a boy and then discovering his love for cycling when he joined his dad and some family friends on a mountain biking trip.

From there he went on to be selected for the Great Britain Cycling Talent Development Squad and pursued a professional career in cycling. This brings its own complications if you have severe haemophilia.

EDUCATING THE TEAM

In Alex's video for World Haemophilia Day 2020, he explained how important it was to educate his own cycling team about haemophilia. Alex could self-infuse his treatment from the age of 9. With his Haemophilia Treatment Centre, he developed a personalised treatment plan, where in everyday life and during training he infuses every second day, but infuses daily when he is racing. He also has a plan to control bleeding with injuries and extra factor is carried in the team car during a race. Joining the new team, he needed to brief not only the team directors and doctors, but also his fellow cyclists. With the Union Cycliste Internationale 'no needle policy' after the performance enhancement drug scandals of previous years, it was quite a shock for one of his new team mates to walk in on him at the training camp while he was injecting his treatment into a vein. Alex had to provide some quick education about haemophilia and that he has a special exemption from the 'no needle policy' to infuse himself with factor VIII during the cycling competitions.



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

INSPIRING THE AUSTRALIA COMMUNITY

Alex has also been a great friend to the Australian bleeding disorders community and keen to share the message that young people with haemophilia 'have such bright prospects'. 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. In 2019 and 2020 he took time out from his busy racing schedule in Victoria to meet up and have a chat with the Donaldson family from Torquay, particularly with their son Will, who has severe haemophilia and is a keen surfer. Alex and Will discussed the challenges they faced and about driving forward with sport to the best of your ability. Karen, Will's mother, commented that it had been 'pretty special' to have such a meaningful conversation.

Will and Alex in 2019 Photo: Karen Donaldson



Alex's World Haemophilia Day 2020 video features an interview with Will towards the end.

Find out more about Alex's story at:

Alex's story - Little Bleeders -
<http://www.littlebleeders.com/alexs-story>

World Haemophilia Day 2020 - Alex Dowsett Thighs Club
YouTube Channel -
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M0HI3RUOp0Q>

Competing in the sport you love (Alex's visit to Australia) –
National Haemophilia, March 2019 –
<https://tinyurl.com/NH-AD-cyclingstory> #