

Dear Friends,

Welcome to the FORDS Care Newsletter bringing you a round-up of the last few months' activities, news and features about the Charity, and in this edition a feature on how an injury can play nasty tricks on the mind!

TONY JEANES

Our deepest condolences to the family and friends of Tony Jeanes, who passed away in December. Tony retired from racing but remained involved through his sons and as a member of the Autospeed team. Tony also took part in our Banger Mechanics' race at Mendips in May 2015 and loved having this opportunity to get back out on track once more, which we are happy to have made possible. We were deeply moved by his family's decision to request donations to FORDS in Tony's memory and thank them for thinking of us at such a difficult time.

FUNDRAISING ROUND-UP

Cowdenbeath Racewall Tombola

We were overwhelmed by the response to our requests for prize donations, with over 120 to be won on the day from local business, local branches of national companies, people from racing and their families, and even Fife Council. Also with tremendous support from the promotion and staff on the day, we had a steady stream of customers through the evening, raising just a little under £400. We did have some prizes left over which as is our custom will go back to Cowdenbeath for next time, which will be bigger and better!

Crimond Fun Day - Pace car rides and two-seater rides

Crimond's Fun Day featuring passenger rides and pace car rides for kids (and big kids) raised exactly £1000 as we were so close the staff held a whip-round to make it up! Was this enough to put Crimond in the top 5 fundraising tracks for the 4th year running? We'll reveal all in the next Spring newsletter.

PRI Arena Essex

One lucky raffle ticket holder won a family ticket and the chance to ride on the pace car with the Legends winner, raising £45, but sadly he did not make himself known to us on the day. In their regular every meeting fundraising for us Arena have raised a superb £634 for us and we thank them for their commitment to the Fund.

Darrell Page raced a 2 litre Saloon at Kings Lynn

Banger racer 318 Darrell Page always wanted to race a Saloon and had never raced on shale, and what better way to achieve two dreams in one than to do it for charity! Girlfriend Olivia and friends Daniel and Hayley also took collection buckets round, all dressed up for Halloween, raising a total of £686.52. Darrell improved quickly on track and is looking forward to repeating the experience later in 2016 at another great Saloon track. Our thanks to the whole extended Page family for all your hard work, generosity and support, and Deane Mayes for the car hire.

HRP Lochgelly Saturday 7th November - Lindsay Barrack's 1300 Stock Cars Ladies' Race

Congratulations to Gayle Stevenson who won the race with Lisa Adams second and race organiser Lindsay Barrack in third. We're deeply grateful to Lindsay who for the third time has organised this event single-handedly for FORDS and all the Ladies who took part, well done every one of you and thank you! Thank you to sponsors Fife Trophy Centre and McGill Motorsports for first 3 trophies and flowers, Ringtone Racepaints top fundraiser, and the brand new Entertainer trophy! Every competing lady also received a keepsake from Treads and Threads and HRP once again kindly sponsored their day licences. This year's event has raised over £4,000, though unfortunately we still can't give you an exact figure as we're waiting on one lady to deliver.

Kings Lynn 28th December - Marie Mayes' 2 litre Saloons Ladies Race

Congratulations to first three finishers Georgie Harris, Jodie Grief and Hannah Thompson. Marie Mayes, wife of Saloon 730 Deane Mayes, single-handedly organised this race for us in barely a month, to end the year on a flourish! Big thanks too to race sponsors Pete Carter of The Plumbers plumbing bathroom and boiler specialists, T&M Gardening Services and Deane Mayes Scrap Collection; Trackstar Racing who surprised us with keepsakes for all ladies taking part; Amanda and Breeze for taking a collection bucket round; photographer Kevin Wickman and last but by no means least Marie herself. This race, including the collection and Kevin's photos, raised a grand total of £2026.26, a much needed injection of funds at this time of year. Thank you all and well done.

SECRETARY'S INSIGHT!

So ... too often I find myself commenting much the same about the past (we've achieved a lot but not as much as we'd like) and the future (we're going to achieve some more soon and a lot more later). Whilst this is all true

every time, it makes for pretty dull reading.

Last July I had a minor operation to release a trapped nerve in my elbow. It went very well but took much, much longer to recover than I expected, with my reasonable medical knowledge. Although I've had worse, it reminded me in real terms what our injured drivers, track staff and mediographers are really going through when they get hurt. So I thought this might be a good time to try and offer some insight into the deeper impact of an injury.

The Injury Itself

Loss of function: Obviously, the injured part of the body can't function as normal, presenting us with interesting challenges even for the most trivial everyday tasks like personal hygiene, getting a drink or a snack, and getting comfortable in bed or sitting up. Struggling with everyday tasks is incredibly frustrating, as a little voice inside constantly cries, "I can do this, I know I can do it – why can't I do it?"

Pain: Pain is really useful to warn us something is damaged, but once we're getting medical care for an injury, pain stops being helpful and needs to be managed. Pain is easily dismissed especially by racers, adrenalin pumping and used to knocks on track and cuts and bruises in the workshop. It's one reason why real injuries aren't always recognised immediately and track medics sometimes waved away impatiently.

Practical Problems

Loss of income: Fairly obvious – can't work, can't earn. This, of course, is the whole point of FORDS, our purpose and reason for being. What's more, job security can come into question. Despite extensive legislation protecting employees, the fear of being 'let go' because of time off injured is very real, and it can happen. In fairness to employers, it's often a case of keeping a small business going, and not a lack of genuine care on their part.

Loss of independence: Be it the school run and dog walking or cooking and laundry, I've yet to meet anyone who got through their entire recovery time without some help. This could mean a partner, family member or friend also taking time off work, or rearranging their time. For more serious injuries, someone may even have to provide all-day assistance and care for a while. Then there are new items on the to-do list: picking up prescriptions, doctors' appointments, and getting to them. By far the majority of injuries mean not driving for a while, and most appointments are during normal worktime, so help is not only needed but often it's a big deal.

Social Issues

Loss of activity: At some point, boredom is likely to set in. For most of our beneficiaries (currently 96%) work is manual or involves driving, or both. Racing is physical; working on race cars is physical. The average racer has an active lifestyle, even if it's not fitness in the sense of a runner or footballer, and a period of forced rest through injury can be difficult to endure.

Loss of social contact: It's often said that racing is not a hobby so much as a way of life. For many, their social circle is mostly centred around racing, watching, building or tweaking cars. Even family holidays might be planned not to interfere with racing. Suddenly, normal social contact both at work and outside of work is drastically reduced. Even the best friends in the world have their own work, homes and commitments.

Realising we're breakable: the true impact of injury

How individuals cope with the challenges thrown up by an injury depend a great deal on the individual, the support they have around them and their own attitude. However, many of the emotional states experienced in this situation are very common and perfectly normal. I have tried to briefly describe the main ones here.

Frustration

Fairly self-explanatory, the frustration of being incapacitated, of having plenty of spare time and not being able to do a thing with it, while so much needs doing that can't be done.

Anxiety

The practical problems of being laid up injured may be solvable, but they need to be thought about, organised and dealt with. Asking someone to make tea, pick up a prescription or take the dog out is one thing – applying for welfare and help from charity organisations is another. What's more, many find themselves having to fight for the right medical care, or forced to disclose finances to strangers armed with tick boxes ready to trip them up. At the precise time we need it to be simple, we have to become experts in form-filling and pester professionals just to get what we're in fact entitled to. Everything feels unfamiliar, stressful and difficult. No wonder people often feel out of control and insecure.

Isolation

Pretty much as described under social issues. Harder still when feelings of isolation clash with the need for social contact, but low self-esteem has a hold. Like wanting to ring a friend, but feeling guilty about bothering them with our problems. Sometimes, people need to keep telling and re-telling their story, trying to make sense of it.

Confusion

This is a strange one but very real and in many different ways. I recognise it from my counselling training as

disbelief, or denial. How could this happen, I've been racing for ___ years and taken some huge hits, yet this was a nothing tap and I've got hurt ... But the main confusion is simply not knowing what to do or who to turn to for help. Often we find that people with more severe injuries get a lot of help and advice, while those with less dramatic injuries, who may be unable to work for as long or longer, get less sympathy and less support and often therefore suffer more from isolation and frustration. They are also likely to struggle more getting both the medical and financial help they need, which in turn can lead to depression and hopelessness.

Depression

Depression is a much misunderstood condition. It is not necessarily feeling sad all the time, though it can be, but it is more like just feeling despondent, flat, deflated or just having no enthusiasm or energy. Described this way, it makes much more sense that being laid up through injury can lead to depression. Because everything takes longer and we're often waiting for help, time seems to slow down and drag. The social issues mentioned above contribute to this flatness, because the usual social circle is reduced or absent altogether, just when we need it most.

Fear for the future

For many racers and some track staff, even if they return to full physical fitness, the realisation that they are breakable after all stops them ever coming back to racing. For some, even if it's possible to pick up again, the consequences of another injury is a price not worth paying. Sometimes it's seeing the distress caused to loved ones that triggers the decision to quit racing.

A 'Full Recovery'

Given that an injury can cause so much mental stress, it should be no surprise that physical and mental recovery are closely linked. Depression and anxiety in particular work against recovery, by altering behaviour, draining energy, and depriving us of good sleep. Depression will make us less likely to eat good regular meals and more likely to snack on junk food that lacks the nutrients and trace elements the body needs to repair. It makes us not feel like doing exercises that will strengthen the injury site, or else overdo it out of impatience. Anxiety is stressful and uses up what energy we have worrying, and keeps us awake or damages the quality of the sleep we do get.

There are no short cuts and quick fixes: to make the best possible recovery means an investment of patience and self-care. To give an injury the best possible chance to heal fully, follow doctor's orders and rest, sleep, eat well, take medication as prescribed, and go one step at a time to avoid aggravation or re-injury.

The good news is that for most people who have suffered an injury the psychological stress will resolve itself as they return to work and normal activities, even if it's a new normal, and even come out stronger. A crisis can be a time when friendships shift, some people really shine, others fade a little. It can be unsettling but it can also be refreshing. For many, it also brings new appreciation of the lifestyle we can easily take for granted.

So I will wrap this up with a few words about a phrase I hear often:

"They know the risks"

It's partly true, but not really. Firstly, we know there is a risk, but we don't really know what the probability of it is. Secondly, what we usually mean is "they know the consequences", and I don't believe we understand those at all unless we've been there. I have tried to present an overview of the consequences as best I can in this article; I hope I have at least partially succeeded.

However I do have a reassuring note on probability. As best I can find out, the probability of injury for a racer is only about double what it is on the roads. Per year, not per mile, of course! If there are 10,000 drivers and 700 race meetings a year (figures from the ORCi website) the chances of needing time off work for a racing injury is about 1% per year across all formulae. Not such a dangerous sport as all that and in fact now off the insurers' top ten most dangerous sports. It's my personal belief that motorsports still suffer from the well-earned reputation gained in the early days when racing was incredibly dangerous. Sadly a reputation is hard to shake off.

I hope I have succeeded in presenting an outline of the challenges faced by injured racers and others involved in our sport. I could have written a whole book, in depth and fully explaining both cause and effect of the psychological impact of injury, and the hardest part of writing this piece has been to keep it readably short.

Thank you for reading.

Manuela Stento

Secretary, on behalf of the Trustees

David Pierce (Chairman), Nick Hughes, Jon Worstencroft & Bob Jones

