

In 1998 I was 23 years old and I worked for a building merchant. At work one day I cut my index finger on a piece of metal. The cut became infected and the doctor prescribed some antibiotics to tackle the infection. But within just a few days an abscess had appeared on my right quadricep (thigh muscle). I didn't have a car then and I had to cycle to see the doctor as my parents were away on a holiday in Norfolk. The doctor prescribed more antibiotics and I cycled back home. But I was in so much pain and my whole leg had started to swell noticeably.

week four things looked as if they were improving and I was looking forward to getting back home and back to my old life.

But the night before I was due to go home I had severe pains in my stomach and I couldn't seem to be able to go to the toilet. We tried running the taps and the shower and I drank loads of water. But nothing worked. When I eventually did manage to go, blood came out. And so I found out that although I had beaten the septicaemia I now had a condition called

# My journey through kidney failure to compete in a Half Ironman competition

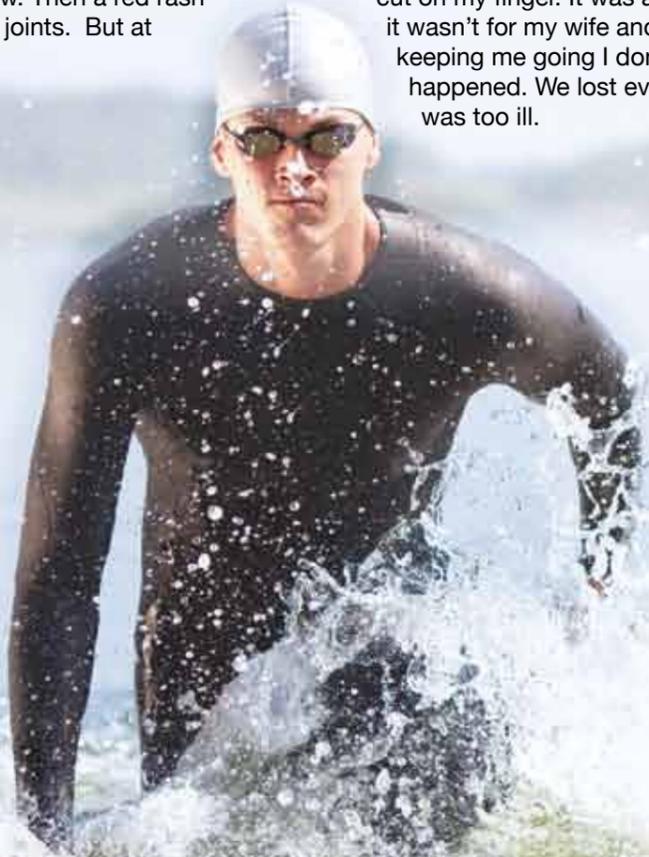
By Seve Jarvis

I 'phoned my brother and he took me to hospital. In A&E I was diagnosed with septicaemia and the doctor told us that they would probably need to amputate my leg. An hour later we were told that they did not need to operate but I was to be admitted immediately for further tests.

I was on powerful drugs administered via a drip but I deteriorated rapidly and over the next month progress was slow. Then a red rash appeared all over all my joints. But at

Hemoch-Scholin purpura (HSP). This rare condition destroyed my kidneys and for the next six years I was very ill as my kidneys slowly stopped working altogether. I was told the only way to treat this would be to have a transplant.

Before all of this had happened I was the number one 'under 21' British judo champion and destined for the world stage. It was all gone over-night, and all from a cut on my finger. It was a very low time in my life. If it wasn't for my wife and two loving young children keeping me going I don't know what would have happened. We lost everything as I couldn't work; I was too ill.



Note from Editor. This article may be viewed on the NKF website at [www.kidney.or.uk](http://www.kidney.or.uk) in the new section there called 'perspectives'



I had my transplant in November 2004. The kidney came from my mum. I had no say in the matter. She was absolutely determined to give me her kidney as I had lost a younger brother at a young age from meningitis. The morning of the operation I was terrified, but when I woke up it was odd; I felt so fresh and alive, I couldn't wait to see my wife. It was very emotional. Mum was up and out of hospital within 5 days and I was out in 10 days.

*"I was the number one 'under 21' British judo champion and destined for the world stage"*

Once out and feeling well and recovered I knew I had a point to prove to myself. Judo was in my thoughts but I knew I had to find an alternative. I turned my attention to the Transplant Games. That year the Transplant Games were held in Loughborough. I won gold in the 5km in my age group and then gold for my long-jump. People who have not been might think that the Transplant Games are easy, but I can assure you the standard is very high and I had to muster all my strength to compete against some really excellent athletes. I watched the other sports that weekend to find what I might be good at. When I got back home I was all set to get back to some real training in a quest to become a world champion. I dreamed and trained so hard that year.

The next year the British Transplant Games were in Bath. I entered the 100m, the long jump and the high jump. It was one of my best days ever and I cleaned up on medals winning all three events. I was also selected to go to the World Transplant Games in Thailand.

My grandmother had recently died, but before she had bought me a pair of running spikes and told me to go out there and make her proud. I wanted to make my whole family proud and to say thank you to them somehow.

I trained enough to make sure I was ready and did all my research on my competitors from around the world. I was confident. On the start line I had shared

a bit of friendly banter with the French Canadian runner next to me. He said "Hey English... get ready to eat my dirt and watch my butt".

I won the race by about 20 meters. I went on to win all my events and set a new world record in the high jump. A coach at the games told me "you haven't achieved anything unless you can do it twice". So in Sweden I won 6 gold medals. But on my return from Sweden I knew I needed another goal. So when a friend of mine told me about the Iron Man competition in Tenby I knew I wanted to have a go.

For my and my wife's 40th birthday we booked the Weymouth Half Ironman Competition. To complete the Half Ironman Competition we would need to swim 1.9km in the sea, cycle 90km and then right into a 20km run. If I did it I would be the first kidney recipient to ever do it in Britain. I was petrified of the sea and had never gone out of my depth in it ever, but I joined a swimming fitness class to learn how to breathe properly and build my stamina.

On race day I was frightened on the start line but I just told myself to do my own race and ignore the others. Once the swim was over I was so happy because I knew I would be ok with the ride and the run, but by the time I started the run I was in so much pain. My whole body was sore and cramping up. I knew couldn't stop because I had so many friends and family there. I broke down crying 4 times in the race purely from a mixture of jubilation and pain.

Not only did I finish but I set a record for being the first British kidney patient and the fastest recipient in the world with a transplant at an International Triathlon Union event. Role-on 2016 and more adventures! I'll never take my gift of a second chance for granted.

I also did a honours degree in sports coaching and performance the same years as training for Ironman and running my own heating business - which I set up just after my transplant.

*'Thanks Mum!'*