

MND Matters: Episode 21: Kevin Sinfield's Ultra 7 in 7

Intro:

You're listening to MND Matters, a podcast from the MND Association.

Helen:

Hello and welcome to MND Matters, brought to you by the MND Association and sponsored by Toyota GB and Toyota Financial Services. Earlier this month our patron Kevin Sinfield took on his third challenge inspired by his friendship with teammate Rob Burrow, who is living with MND. Kev's Ultra 7 in 7, raising money for the MND Association and other MND charities, gave the MND Matters team the chance to get out of the studio and onto the road. So we followed Kev's extraordinary exploits during that incredible week to bring you exclusive coverage of the challenge. Now the weather wasn't always so kind so please forgive us. You will hear the sound of wind and torrential rain during some of the conversations. We start off on day one of the challenge with Dr. Brian Dickie, Director of Research Development at the MND Association.

Brian:

Well, here we are at Murrayfield. It's about half past seven in the morning. We've just cheered Kevin off on the first leg of his seven ultra marathons. So he's on his way through the center of Edinburgh, eventually ending up at Melrose. It's beautiful morning, the sun's just coming up. So hopefully it's going to be wonderful running weather for Kevin

Ian:

There was a fantastic turnout this morning at Murrayfield with representatives of the MND Association, MND Scotland, and the My Name's Doddie Foundation. Earlier this morning, Kevin and the team laid a wreath at the Murrayfield war memorial and observed a minute's silence on today, which is Remembrance Sunday, Doddie and another person living with MND, were also in attendance. And there was a huge number of volunteers and well wishes gathering to wish Kevin and the team good luck as they embarked on this 7 in 7 ultra marathon.

Journalist:

Timing wise, are you pleased how your schedule panned out?

Kevin:

Yeah, really good. You know, the temptation is to set off too quick. And I think we were disciplined enough to all that, but we've got loads of fuel and as well. So I feel about that for a walk. Just to get a really nice day we'll be in November. We were expecting hailstorms snowing, and everything being thrown off. So it's been incredible.

Journalist:

How special was it to have Doddie at Murrayfield this morning to send you off?

Kevin:

Yeah, we weren't quite sure whether it was gonna back it was certainly a big day on today. And a big night for the chariot on Thursday night. So we weren't quite sure whether the early start, whether it be able to make it but traveling was awesome rollers meant so much to us. And the reason we're here is more of the added support has given Rob. It's been awesome. And we can't thank him enough for traveling with us this morning to start us off with. His new trainers on. It's fantastic. One down six to go.

Journalist:

We'll leave you shortly to go and get your recovery started. But you're all set for the leg tomorrow.

Kevin:

Yeah, yeah, it's really important. We get our recovery right now. So, you know, the team has been incredible so far the next year, and we do the right things now and machinery fueled up and getting to sleep. It's only right there'll be an event on here at Melrose. A little bit later on, it's only right we've spent some time with these people. It's called like the officer a lot of good time here as well. And that's really important when you're when you're aware with your team and account that you have a good time as well and enjoy spending time with each other.

Jenn:

It's Day 2 we just saw Kev leave Melrose and I just did my first live TV interview. I won't lie. I was terrified. But I thought to myself, it's nothing compared to what people with MND goes through. And if I can put myself out of my comfort zone for 20 seconds then it's worth it. It was absolutely fantastic. Again, seeing Kev set off on day 2 meeting the lovely drummer from the club at Melrose. And everybody who was there last night for the q&a, which was really inspiring. Now, we're moving on to Jedburgh as the first stop and I need to go and saw some bacon butties for the team.

Guest:

Hi I'm Andy. I live out this way so just popped in to cheer him on. Great thing he's doing amazing.

Guest:

I'm here so I was at Ankrum. And I'm here to support him because I lost a good cousin and friend through MND a year and a half ago. So I think they're doing a wonderful, wonderful job.

Guest:

Hi I'm Amy. I have popped up with my mum mums are keen runner. So my bet nothing quite like this distance at all. It's an amazing cause. So yeah, just keen to get behind and support as much as we can.

Jenn:

So following what calves beat and the team have been doing is it inspired you to get involved? Have you got any races coming up?

Guest:

Nothing of this distance. Um, I just did a half marathon and I'm doing another one in May. But yeah, that is that's my limit for the distance, nothing over that.

Guest:

I've been following Doddie since he was playing at Murrayfield in the old days, and seeing them come through the whole saga. And to see him walking on the pitch, the last time you did walk on the pitch of his whole family was just heartbreaking. And then he was there again yesterday, bringing the ball on, and it was brilliant with his family.

Jenn:

So we're here outside Otterburn castle. You've come along to support Kev, we'd like to introduce yourself and why you decided to come along today.

Guests:

I'm Heather, Chris. And we lost a very close friend about changes or with MND, and it opened our eyes to the whole horrendous thing. Yeah, and the fact that what Kevin's trying to do is just so wonderful. It really is worth making the effort to come out and see him and applaud him because I just think he's a great guy.

Martin:

Ali's friends went school with his wife, so very close to MND and MND Association. So, every time we do a start, we find someone who's got a relationship with MND and we ask them to bang the drum. The drum is synonymous that want to keep banging the drum for MND. And then number seven is synonymous with ourselves. So he's going to bang the drum seven times, and then we're going to be off. So after three, you're going to bang it seven times, whatever you do, don't lose count 123.

Jenn:

Just wanted to share a few of the highlights from the first two days of Kev's Ultra 7 in 7 challenge. So from starting in Murrayfield yesterday, there's been some amazing support along the route. People stopped in lay bys people on the way to school, people in their work clothes coming out of work to come and support Kev. There was even a school today, where all the kids came out to cheer Kevin the team along, which has been absolutely fantastic to see. And loads of these people have made very generous donations. And some of them we're also sharing with Kevin the team or with the people at the stopping points, their reasons for coming out and supporting and the gratitude they feel for people raising awareness of MND. Lots of people have lost loved ones to MND. And so it was really nice hearing the personal reasons why people chose to take the time to come and support. And I think it's really good for Kevin the team to get that boost as they're running through some places, perhaps when their legs might start to ache, getting that support and know how much it means to them. And then just wanting to share what happens when Kev reaches where he's staying for the night. That isn't the end of the day for the team behind Kev's challenge. That's the time when the nutritionist have to start preparing, recovery drinks, planning what the team are going to eat for breakfast snacks for the next day lots and lots of Jaffa Cakes. I asked how many and so many that they don't even know an accurate

figure of the number jaffa cakes that will be consumed during this challenge. So just because Kev and Chris and David have stopped running doesn't mean that the day is over for the team behind it. There's lots of other things going on in the background. But then after everybody showered and got comfortable, Kevin the team will sit down for tea together and it's a chance for them to sort of reflect and share things throughout the day. So I'll give you an update tomorrow. That's the end of day two of Kev's Ultra 7 in 7 challenge.

Guest:

Day 3, start of day three. Amazing watching him coming up over the corner bar because I've cycled up there and I know how tough that is. It really is a leg sapping hill and seeing them come over obviously from Scotland, into England and to Northumberland, into what I class as God's country and heading south for the rest of his journey through Northumberland, all through to Durham and finally across to Manchester is absolute and amazing achievement and so much money raised already what was the figure today £320,000 pound?

Guest:

What you're doing is amazing and bringing so much obviously money but attention to MND and the people suffering from it. I mean it's brilliant it's more than anyone would even think to do never mind just actually do it themselves. So no, I agree. And I think him standing around to actually taking the time to talk to people as well giving them hugs asking if they're all right in the fight. It was such an amazing thing to do.

Dom:

You support the MND Association here locally don't you at Kingston Park by providing space for our support groups. Is that right?

Guest:

Yes, we do a host them every second Tuesday of the month. They're just a pleasure to have here. It's lovely. The ladies that look after the group Glenda are they're just absolutely fantastic. And they look after them. So they're booking their Christmas party here. So we can't wait to have that and get to know them all a little bit better. They love it. They look really they look forward to it so much asking if it's still going ahead what times it is. And when they come in. It's like the smile, the smile just lights up their face. It's such a nice thing to do for them to actually meet people who are going through the same thing they are

Dom:

If Kevin was here, and you could say something to him, What would you say to him?

Guest:

It's absolutely amazing what he's doing, like absolutely fantastic. And he makes it look so easy. I'd be like passed out on the floor. And he just looked like it was a breeze for him. Yeah, it looked like it was just like just stroll into the shop. So it was absolutely unbelievable. But I'm sure he's so tired inside. But he's just not even showing it at all. He's just all he cares about is the end goal I think, which is so clear. So good on him.

Dom:

So Lucy, we're on day three, we're just outside of Pontyland here. So you're standing here in the rain, waiting for Kev to run past. Why?

Guest:

Because I think it's an amazing thing that he's doing, raising awareness of MND, which is a little well known about still, charity wise, I think it's an astonishing thing to do, and for the families and people that are suffering from MND, it really gives them hope that someone's kind of raising awareness.

Guest:

Well. Kevin's raised so much awareness for the MND community and raised so much money. And as part of that community, I just want to be there to support him and do my little thing to help out along the trail. Give him a go on Kevin. Yeah, you know, just be there just like he's been there for us. But I felt really, really grateful that he was doing it. And I mean, I was soaking wet, but he must have been absolutely soaking. I was glad it wasn't me. But I was just so thankful that he was doing it for us. So just thank you like on behalf of every person in the MND community. I know everyone just wants to say thank you. So thank you.

Dom:

What you feeling at the minute. What's your thoughts on Kevin's amazing challenge?

Guest:

I think it's really exciting, especially for everybody with MND.

Dom:

And why are you here today?

Guest:

Well, I lost me husband to MND seven and a half years ago have volunteered since so I do quite a lot of work with them now.

Dom:

Excellent. And if you could speak to him right now, and you might shortly what would you say to him?

Guest:

I would tell them well, done, and thank you very much for what you do.

Dom:

And be awareness he's raising. It's absolutely incredible.

Guest:

Yes, yes. Yes, it is.

Dom:

Thank you so much for all you do.

Guest:

Thank you. You're welcome.

Dom:

If you could speak to Kev right now, what would you say to him?

Guest:

Just just keep on going. He's amazing. He is a true legend. And yeah, just keep going doing what he's doing, and he's got this.

Dom

So it's day 4 and we're here in Wynyard. I've got four of you here. So you've just seen Kev run in to great fanfare, how yous feeling.

Guest:

Oh, so brilliant. I mean, what a great thing he's doing and we're just really chuffed to be to see him do it. Really awesome.

Dom:

And what does it mean to you? What does it mean to us personally to see and deal with this massive challenge?

Guest:

Well, the money he's raising and hopefully we can get some kind of research to fix this horrible horrible disease because it just it just strikes you don't know and it is a death sentence.

Guests:

He's a super human being. And we'd give him a cwtch. Lots of cwtchs.

Dom

Obviously, he's going all the way to Manchester. What do you think he could do to recover after this? What have you got any tips for how to recover after a long run?

Guests:

I think a big gin. Lots of lovely massage. I've never done a big run so no idea. I get exhausted walking up the stairs. Definitely a holiday in the Bahamas. I can help carry his bags

Guest:

My name is Valerie Woodward, and I'm from Nunthorpe. And we've been following Rob's story since it first came out. And I think between them what they've done to bring the attention to everybody, we've

followed Doddie as well. So it's been lovely to watch everything on the television. But we just thought we'd like to see Kev today for the first time that all he's gone through running to raise the funds.

Jenn:

Thank you. And if you could say anything to Kev, what would you say to Kevin and the team for what they've done?

Guest:

Emotional. Well done. And the best of luck

Dom:

So Sandra, we are waiting for Kevin to arrive here at Wynyard. How are you feeling at the minute?

Sandra:

Quite emotional actually. It's amazing isn't it

Dom:

Yeah. You're going to be banging our drum aren't you. How are you feeling about that?

Sandra:

Yeah, well I wish had had both arms.

Dom:

Yes, unfortunately you've broken one of your arms. You're just going to have to bang it extra hard with your other hand.

Sandra:

I think its only one stick isn't it?

Dom:

Yes we don't expect you to be something out the Who.

Sandra:

Not Ringo

Guest:

My son has MND and like this lady here all of the people that are going through this terrible disease, they need all the help they can get. A cure is almost certainly still a long way down the road. But thanks to guys like Kev and the MND Association, they're bringing it closer. And if it helps just one person not have to go through this, it'd be worth every footstep. I mean, 40 miles a day for 70 days, seven days. It's phenomenal.

Dom:

Makes you tired just thinking about it.

Guest:

He's just a humble man. Just an ordinary guy doing what he can, you know, there's more people in the world like Kevin

Dom:

You've just seen Kev run in. How do you feel?

Guest:

Elated. I was so glad to have to have seen him doing what he's doing and to have the photo with him. And just to support him really, because the guy is an absolute legend. A legend on the field. But now, what he's doing for people with MND, and the sufferers is phenomenal.

Vicky:

It's 4pm. It's day five and we are outside the Minster. And we're hoping that Kev will be coming around the corner very, very soon. And I know that he must be feeling so so exhausted. It's been a long, long day, traveling through North Yorkshire ended up at the York Minster for day five. And yes, the crowd is just amazing. There are so many people here. It is just bonkers how many people have turned out? We've seen all sorts today. There's the TV here. There are people lining the streets and graduations that have been taking place at York Minster with actually, funnily enough, just seen an engagement happen. So it really is all happening on day five outside the York Minster.

Guest:

I'm John, I'm from New York and monthly into rugby league. So and I think what this guy is doing is absolutely unbelievable. I'm not I didn't know much about MND until Kevin started doing what I was doing so. So it's just Well, we're here just to support him. And as you can see, Yorkshire come out in droves when somebody's doing something for some sort of charity. So that's basically why me and my wife are here.

Vicky:

it's about 330. We're waiting for them to come in and finish his leg of the day. It's amazing here. There's so many people here most people have got their umbrellas up because it's still raining. Can you believe it? It's just an amazing atmosphere with David at the moment. So if you could just introduce yourself and just tell me a bit about why you decided to come today. What what what kind of inspired you to come.

Guest:

Okay, I'm Councillor David Carr. I'm the Right Honourable Lord Mayor of York. I'm here with my wife Linda, the lady, Mayoress. And my colleague, the Sheriff of York Mrs. Susan Mercer and the leader of the city council here at York, Keith Aspen, we're delighted to be here, because it is such an incredible achievement that Kevin is doing to raise money to fight this incredibly bad disease. And, you know, we're showing as much support as we can by being here welcoming Kevin, hopefully very soon. I think he's about a quarter of an hour away. And we just want to be part of this incredible achievement. Yeah, right.

Vicky:

And what does it feel like to see so many people have come out to speak to Kevin and to see Kevin and to support him along the way,

Guest:

I'm actually very pleasantly surprised by the number of people who are here. Here we are on a rainy dark, dank, November afternoon, it's going dark, the lights are coming on. And yet this square in front of the Minster is full of people full of well wishes for Kevin, and it's just very very heartening.

Kevin:

This really, really special for all of us is something to remember for the rest of our lives. I think you know why we're here. We're all trying to do something positive for the MND community. And our little mate Rob Burrow, I can't thank you enough. I know we've had rain all day, but our spirit hasn't wavered on and that's down to you guys supporting us and thank you very much for being here today.

Journalist:

Katie tell us why you're banging the drum this morning.

Guest:

My Dad was diagnosed with MND in August 2016, today would have actually been his birthday so its an absolute honour to be here today. Everything that he has done for them and the community just means so much yeah.

Vicky:

We're asking people to describe Kevin in one word.

Guest:

Oh inspirational.

Guests:

I mean superhuman, I suppose. Superhuman. But that doesn't really it does for his feats, but it doesn't describe his commitment to his pal. Legend. absolute legend. You can't say two. I say incredible. That's incredible. What about you? You got a good word for Kevin. Amazing. Absolute star There's so many isn't there. I think he's just a really honest, one word? He's honest. He's an honest person. Courageous. Phenomenal. Inspiring. Yeah. Resilient, very resilient.

Vicky:

What a great word.

Guests:

I have a whole speech. I see Kevin on the radio all the time. And I really wanted to see him in real life. So we came over to see him in Tadcaster.

Guest:

Awesome awesome absolutely awesome.

Guest:

My name is Dave Farrington. Ex-fireman for 26 years done quite a bit of fundraising in over the years. Watch the Rob Burrow, Sally Nugent documentary just brought me inside. Just something that touched me. Decided to do something and so what I've done is combine my passion with horse riding and eventing and keeping that awareness for motor neuron disease. Things I never knew about. I knew about motor neuron disease, but I didn't know anything about it. Obviously, Kevin, you know, Doddie, Weir and Rob have brought it to the forefront, which is fantastic. So I just wanted to be a small part of it really.

Guest:

Hi, I'm Ian Flatt, hear in Tadcaster on day six, out to support Kevin and cheer him out again. Rachel and I've just had the privilege of banging the drum and setting him off on this leg. Beautiful turnout this morning. Great crowd.

Guest:

We're here in Tadcaster to set Kevin off with day six. And I've just banged the drum to get him going. Been very exciting. There's been a huge crowd and everybody is so positive and so encouraging and so motivating. It's been a pleasure an absolute pleasure to be involved.

Guest:

I'm Sue Lodge, I'm at Langlands Garden Centre in Leeds. I've come to say thank you to Kevin Sinfield for all he's doing not just for Rob. But for all of us that have MND. It's just nice to say thank you. I'm sure lots of people already have, but compared to what he's doing, just turning up and saying thank you's, its nothing really is it. Amazings all you can say.

Kevin:

Everybody knows Martin's don't they. Thank you very much for turning out for us. It's great to be back in Leeds. And thanks for that really kind reception. We will come back out soon, just getting fixed up. I know you all know why we're doing what we're doing. We all forget to see Rob in a little while. But we think that MND beacon is shining brighter than ever. And that's thanks to you guys and your support. So thank you.

Guest:

I'm Emma, and I am a volunteer for the Motor Neuron Disease Association. I work in the Leeds clinic, where I get to meet and greet all of the people in their families who are living with motor neurone disease, and just basically welcome them to the clinic, tell them what's going to happen, introduce them to their professionals, if it's their first time of being in the clinic, and basically, make sure that the leaflets are all filled up. So and talk to them about if they've got any issues or anything that they just want to talk about. I'm there to try and support them through that process. And I find it really rewarding. And I think if anybody wants to volunteer volunteering for the Motor Neuron Disease Association is a fabulous organisation to work within. They're very kind, very supportive and doing amazing work. Lots of people

said they'd never heard of it. And then unfortunately, their life is now experiencing motor neuron disease. But they see that what Rob has done and what Kevin is doing, and I think it makes people more positive that there is a there is going to be a future and there is going to be more treatments potentially in the future. And hopefully one day a cure and by people coming out and supporting and and being aware and Kevin and Rob being so public, which is just giving so much is just inspirational, and lots of people mentioned that in the clinic.

Ian:

Hi this is Ian Gardner from the Association is day six up here in Headingley in Leeds and it's an absolutely fantastic turnout, as you would imagine from Leeds Rhinos fans are members of the Leeds community coming to cheer Kevin and the team on as they get towards their final destination in Manchester tomorrow afternoon. Brilliant atmosphere with lots and lots of people making huge amounts of donations into all the buckets that we've got here. And it's great to see a massive turnout from all of the charities including the Darby Rimmer MND foundation. We've also got a representative here today as well.

Guest:

So my name is James Moran, I'm the nutritionist on the Ultra 7 in 7 challenge, and we're on day six at the moment. Nutrition wise has been holding up unbelievably well. He's been sticking to the schedule with his eating and drinking his weights been really stable. We're getting as much carbs in as we can when he finishes to replenish for the next day. So from that side of things he's been doing really, really well better than the Extra Mile challenge actually. His body's pretty pretty battered, but that's that's to be expected at this stage.

Vicky:

And how many calories roughly a day is he eating.

Guest:

around 8000 calories Give or take? And even then he's still in what we call a calorie deficit. So we're not able to get in the amount of calories burned in each day. We're just trying to minimize the size of the deficit. But his weights holding stable, so we must be pretty, pretty good. Pretty accurate, I think.

Vicky:

I mean, we've got one more day. Yeah, he's gonna do it?

Guest:

Yeah of course he'll do it. I mean, it do it. Even if it didn't have all this support stuff. And even if there wasn't crowd to watch it in, that's just the mark of the the man that he is. Even if he had to do it on his hands and knees. It's still do so yeah, of course, he's gonna do it.

Journalist:

Okay, we got to do the countdown from seven folks.

Suzanne:

We're here with John Maguire who is from the BBC, who's been following Kev all week, John, how's this week been for you?

John:

It's been fantastic, isn't it? It's been absolutely extraordinary. A pleasure and a privilege to do it really, sometimes in this job, you don't get to pick and choose your job. So I was delighted when they asked me to do it in the first place. Because I did something similar with Ed Slater. Earlier on in the summer, who did a crazy bike ride that was, I don't know, 150 miles a day sort of thing. But it's been great. And what what keeps you going and what gives you so much energy is not only the team themselves and what they're doing, you know, I can't say, oh, we're getting a bit tired, but they're doing 40 miles a day. But it's the people. It's the it's the I know, it sounds like a cliché was the energy from the crowd. And the stories from the MND community are just incredible, whether it's whether it's for people who have the disease themselves, or people who've lost loved ones or people who are, who have loved ones who are living with it. I mean, they're just, you know, it really, really inspires you and spurs you on, and makes you want to keep telling those stories and keep banging the drum. They've had great support throughout. So I wasn't at Edinburgh when they first started but I I picked them up between there and Melrose. And there are a lot of crowds there. That's Doddie's hometown. So that was really good. But to get people out on a cold, dark, November morning, at half past six quarter to seven. You sort of thing, oh I'm not quite sure. So. So you always pre plan these things and plan for the worst and thought, well, we'll we'll get the get the team all together and we'll make a lot of noise. haven't needed to do that. They've grown and grown and grown, as he says, as people I think have been aware that they can see it. I've been aware of how special it is that it is a moment in history that I hope no one ever has to do this again. Because it's extraordinary, so tough on the on the guy's bodies. But yeah, the crowds have been just brilliant, wonderful to see people, difficult to control at times, we stopped the traffic in Tadcaster yesterday, which of course, we're not allowed to do. And it just happened. It was just organic. And again, it's because people wanted to be there. They wanted to tell their stories, and they wanted to be part of it. So again, fantastic.

Suzanne:

We're outside Bradford stadium. It's about quarter past six on day seven of Kev's challenge and I'm here with Tracy and Helen, who are from our local branch up in Bradford and we're going to be cheering and bucket collective this morning, ladies. Yeah, yes. And how is it for you seeing Kathy you were here yesterday to greet him in Well, yesterday. Yeah. And how was that?

Guest:

Quite emotional. My husband had MND and he was a Bradford City fan. So just coming back is quite emotional for me but extremely uplifting. And the greeting I think that Bradford gave him was quite special.

Suzanne:

It really was. It was outstanding, wasn't it? Yeah. And you can tell Kev so appreciates that.

Guest:

I think we're both probably gonna watch the rugby this afternoon. Yes. And we should be watching him get onto the pitch at Old Trafford.

Suzanne:

That's gonna be a special moment.

Guest:

I just hope he gets up all those hills between here and there. It's just up and down all the way.

Suzanne:

Shall we not tell him that this morning?

Guest:

I think he might know as he comes from that side comes from, the other side of the Pennines to where we are now.

Suzanne:

You really wanted to say the wrong side of the Pennines didn't you?

Guest:

Yeah. The red rose side.

Suzanne:

So we're out in Bradford and you are what's your name?

Guest:

Emily

Suzanne:

And you made a beautiful poster to cheer Kev on, didn't you? Yeah, yeah. So you tell me about Kev Why did you do that for Kev?

Guest:

Cuz I knew that it would do something good for MND. Because for people that have MND because his best friend has MND and he's trying to help other people with MND.

Suzanne?

And what did it say on your poster? Can you remember?

Guest:

It said Go, Kevin it said thank you so much. Thank you for helping people who have MND.

Suzanne:

Okay, so we're at the Rams Inn at Saddleworth. We're waiting for Kevin stop to have day seven and your name is

Guest:

Matthew English from the Huddersfield giants.

Suzanne:

Talk to us about why you've come out to support Kev.

Guest:

Well, as a former rugby player, which we thought it's only only right to come and show our support. I think I think it's amazing what he's doing such an amazing charity. And the least we could do was come out come out on a cold Saturday morning and show him some support..

Suzanne:

Absolutely. So is it a bit of a hero?

Guest:

Yeah, it's an inspiration, showing showing what's possible. It's amazing to see just how far it's pushing his body.

Guest:

I'm Stephanie, and part of the MND Manchester branch Association. We sit on the committee and then husband, and I'm watching I lost my dad and my granddad to MND. So since then, that was seven to about seven years ago. And since then, we've been doing fundraising and supporting whatever. But later on today, we're going down to the MND charity shop in Romley and we are outside selling Christmas cards.

Suzanne:

Fantastic. You never stop?

Guest:

No. Well, we've got to keep going with like, as Kevin said, you know, things that beacon has got to keep shining. The awareness now it's fantastic. You think I know. When eight years ago when my dad was diagnosed it people still didn't know about it. And I heard a lady on one of the things he was saying that people say and it's rare, it doesn't appear to be anymore. You hear more and more people diagnosed. Well fit and healthy people, as well as older people. And it's just so sad. And we've got to get these funds to find that cure.

Guest:

Come on super Kev!

Suzanne:

Very good. What's your name?

Guest:
Jessie.

Suzanne:

We're in the car park in Morrison's on the outskirts of Manchester are waiting for Kev to come into the stop. It's just past lunchtime. And once again, there's loads and loads of people here. And that includes Emma, who is a volunteer for the MND Association. And just tell us a little bit about what you do with your volunteering role with us.

GuestL

Okay, so I have a couple of roles. I volunteer as an association visitor for central and east Lancs. And I am also carer's champion. And I'm also involved with campaigns. And I'm also working currently on a research project for spirituality with existentialism. And it's a project that I'm working on for the MND Association. It's great to see so many strangers coming together and just wanting to put money into your box into a charity box and offer support which is absolutely fantastic.

Suzanne:

These boxes I found were actually designed for coins you could rattle coins down, but people are putting notes in almost every time.

Guest:

I've just had one gentleman come over and he said it's just stopped me so excuse me, if you had some money or raveled up and he's trying to force it into the box and he could start just you might need to split the money a little so there's you know, there's hundreds pounds going in. Absolutely amazing.

Suzanne:

We are here with Lou Stewart who has come out to support. So what's the atmosphere like Lou?

Guest:

The atmosphere is, as I expected, it's pretty special you see it on the TV. But actually when you're here, you can feel just everybody is here to support Kev and the awareness is being raised massively so Yeah, huge.

Suzanne:

And as someone who's been affected by MND personally how has it been for you this week watching that kind of awareness and the support and that the love for Kevin for and the knowledge of the disease growing

Guest:

That for me is been probably the most outstanding thing is that you feel like you're not alone. When you're at home you realize you know we've got the MND Association, Darby Rimmer. Everyone's given us loads of support, but just to see the general public and people messaging and kind of getting what

the MND Association is about. And I think that's the thing that it's just the awareness and you feel like you've got the whole country behind you as it's grown.

Suzanne:

Which for somebody in your position must be really kind of reassuring, quite heartwarming as Yeah,

Guest:

Yeah because I think probably, since Marcus is being diagnosed, doing a bit of research, going back five, six years, it was the forgotten disease whereas now it feels like there's hope because people are pushing it and putting it to the forefront of everybody's minds.

Suzanne:

what why have you come down?

Guests:

And we'll just work Kevin and everything is doing and to show us apart from watching motor neurone disease, and just to help raise awareness really. And just to let Kevin know that everybody's, so it's just amazing what he's doing. Absolutely fantastic.

Suzanne:

And you have a connection to MND I understand?

Guest:

Yeah, my brother died three years ago. Really close to all of our hearts.

Suzanne:

And seeing Kev do this kind of thing for the third when he said, now for you to raise awareness. How is that because that's, that's, you know, we hear a lot that people have now got so much more awareness.

Guest:

Three years ago people hadn't heard of it, to explain what it was to raise awareness like Kev has brought it to the nation. So I think that sounds really good. Got that out there and people's raising the money for it.

Suzanne:

And tell us about your brother

Guest:

Me and him played for Keithley so he's a rugby player as well. So we were close.

Suzanne:

And what was his name?

Guest:

Phil Stephenson.

Guest:

It's one of those that we've got a massive rugby connection because rugby was in the family and his dad played for cougars. And then obviously, Andy and Phil followed through and it's just we've always got the connection with rugby. And it is a rugby family. That's the thing that everybody comes together.

Suzanne:

We're in the box in Manchester, kept on his final stop before he gets to Old Trafford, and Dom is here. Dom is one of our regional fundraisers. And Dom you've been tracking Kev, sort of as dotting in and out over the last few days. Haven't you tell us how it's been?

Dom:

So I've been using Northumberland since he crossed the border. But I've been right the way through to Manchester today. It's been an amazing week. I mean, what a fantastic achievement. He's never stopped. He's been absolutely brilliant. The weather has been horrendous at times. It's been long days, but it's 100% worth it. The crowds have got bigger and bigger and bigger the further south we've got and just people have been so kind. They've been putting lots of money in the buckets have been shouting, you know, real, you know, shouting out encouragement. We've had schools who've made handmade you know, good luck signs. I mean, it's been brilliant. It's been fantastic.

Suzanne:

You've turned out to see Kev this morning. What Why have you done that? What's got you out this morning?

Guest:

I lost my dad to MND eight years ago this month. So I'm running the Rob Burrow marathon in May. The thing that stands out for me is the fact that Kevin and Rob and Doddie and Ed and Steven the carrying on for the ordinary man in the street like my dad, and that means a lot. He was a volunteer just like what Kevin is just volunteering giving your time for nothing. You know, it's were never about money, he was the tightest man in Yorkshire. But what he did give was time and he would have just absolutely loved what Kevin is doing and all the team behind him as well. So it's not just about Kevin, you've got to think about the vehicle behind him, all the support, you guys with your bucketss you know it's a massive operation but that the way spearheading the campaign is just absolutely fantastic and the rugby family just behind it. So yeah, absolutely brilliant.

Martin:

I've got a man here from the local branch who is going to bang the drum seven times and then we're going to go.

Suzanne:

And Kev's off on the last leg of his Ultra marathon, seven in seven days.

Sally Nugent:

Kevin Sinfield. Congratulations. You made it.

Helen:

After Kevin completed his Ultra 7 in 7, he sent MND Matters this exclusive message.

Kevin:

It was the best week of my life again. I thought the seven and seven, the original seven and seven couldn't be topped. And obviously the Extra Mile last year was a really tough challenge and crammed into 24 hours without any sleep, but this one was just a wonderful experience to represent Rob again, Doddie, Steven Ed. And that full MND community was wonderful for all of us. We've come away after the week feeling like the Ready Brek man, we've all got a glow about us. But we've all had a wonderful week being back in a team, representing in a beautiful community that came out and stood shoulder to shoulder with us and the support was absolutely incredible.

I think it's showed that people in the UK care. And they care about people with MND, we care about the families who've been challenged and ravaged by such a cruel disease. And some of that support along the route just drove us on give us energy and pushed us along the route. And I have to say, at no time, did we ever think of like quitting. I don't think that was ever an option. We wanted to give it our all. And even if something had gone drastically wrong we would have crawled to Old Trafford, it meant that much to all of us.

The best moment, ah there were so many incredible touching moments where we met people and families. And they're the moments that you remember when you're face to face with people, and you get to hear their story. And they tell you the impact that the team have had during the week during the incredible moments. But if we had to pick one. It probably be when we run into York. It was the longest day it was 72 kilometers and been a really tough day. It rained all day. And as we came into York the range have started to stop, there's a bit of drizzle, the Christmas lights were on. It was just around four o'clock. So it was just starting to get a little bit dark. And we couldn't believe what we saw. Outside the Minster, it was just surreal. It was like something from a Charles Dickens film, Christmas film. And so many wonderful people there to see us. It was a real emotional moment for the team. And certainly for myself to see and meet some wonderful people was incredible.

The team just knitted together wonderful. People went above and beyond were so selfless in ensuring that the runners and cyclists got where we needed to be. And then the banter, the banter, the support. The laughter, was brilliant. And it's the best team I've ever been in. I think when you're in a team that you're doing something really difficult and tough together, but you're all covering each other's backs. And you're doing it for something that means so much to all of you, but you understand the difference it could make through the awareness we're generating, and also through the funds we're generating, because ultimately, we want to find a cure. But we also need to help families now. And we'll keep trying to do our bit. I think the biggest gift you can give people is hope. And I'd like to think throughout the week, we provided some more, and through the funds that have been generated and the awareness that has been created. Once again, MND is in the spotlight, and that beacon is shining brighter than it ever has. And that's something we're particularly proud of, but we haven't done that on our own.

There are a couple of thank yous, throughout all this. We had some wonderful people come and join us and run sections with us and just continue to add and bring energy to the group. But they brought an extra awareness as well the likes of Steve Cram, Jonathan Edwards, Gemma Bonner, Paul Scholes, Jamie Peacock, Jamie Jones, Will Greenwood and I'll probably miss somebody. So I do apologise. But they just brought wonderful energy, the Leicester boys who came and, you know, good friends from Leicester, the coaches, Richard Mathers, some of the sponsors joined us for some parts of it. And their support was, yeah, was really important.

And then a big thank you lastly to all those that donated. I'm saying lastly because there's too many thank yous here. But all those that donated all those that came and stood at the side of a road side in the rain. All those that nipped out in the pajamas from some of those early morning stints who came out and brought a smile and brought energy to us were wonderful. And we met so many wonderful families throughout the whole route from Edinburgh, down to Old Trafford, and it's you people that made it really special for us. And yeah, we loved every single minute of representing the MND community and we'd all do it again in a heartbeat. So thank you very much.

Outtro

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