

'PLEASE HELP SAVE MY LIFE'

Desperate plea from 15-year-old NSB pupil as he faces a race against time

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Bone marrow match search

Matt's in race against time for a donor

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A TEENAGE rugby fan is facing a race against time to find a bone marrow donor as he anxiously waits for a life-saving operation.

Matt Herbert, aged 15, was diagnosed with leukaemia in December 2008.

After several bouts of intensive chemotherapy Matt, a year 10 pupil at Northampton School for Boys, went into early remission.

In September, however, doctors told him the leukaemia had returned and that this time he requires an urgent bone marrow transplant.

Yesterday, Matt, from Great Billing, started a new course of chemotherapy in Birmingham.

And back at his school, in Northampton, his friends and teachers were joined by sports stars to launch an urgent appeal to find him a bone marrow donor.

More than 13 million people are on the bone marrow database across the world and so far nobody has been a match for teenager.

Matt, a talented fly-half for the Old Northamptonians Rugby Club, said: "This time the doctors have said that the chemo is even harsher and there will be two rounds and then a bone marrow transplant, radiotherapy and steroids.

"All my mates, family and friends, school, rugby club and Northampton Saints have been such a big support to me all the way through this journey and I am glad of this opportunity to thank them all."

The Matt's Match campaign is organising donor sessions across the town for people to be tested and then go on the national donor list. The process, which is as simple as spitting into a plastic cup, could prove to be life-saving to either Matt or someone else requiring a transfusion.

Matt added: "If you're not a match for me there are many other people who, each day, find themselves in the same situation as me – please help to reduce their worry of whether a suitable match might be found."

Matt's friends, all donning fluorescent hats, also helped the launch at the Billing Road school yesterday.

Team-mate Ben Hammersley, aged 14, said: "Matt knows it is going to be hard. He has been through it once and he knows what is coming this time."

Another friend, Zac Forskitt, aged 14, added: "We are all just hoping someone comes forward.

"It is not hard and it doesn't hurt and it could save Matt's or someone else's life."

The first donor session will be held on Saturday, November 21, at Sixfields Stadium, between 12.30pm and 6.30pm.

For details on the appeal visit www.mattsmatch.co.uk.



■ **Matt's friends, family and teachers are joined by stars from the Saints, Cobblers and Northants county cricket to launch donor bone marrow campaign.**

CE picture by LOUISE O'CALLAGHAN 091109LOC14

Sports stars support campaign

STARS from the world of rugby, football and cricket have all backed the Matt's Match campaign.

Northampton Saints rugby stars, Dylan Hartley, Courtney Lawes, Ben Foden, Shane Geraghty and Chris Ashton all took time out to send their best wishes while away on England duty last week.

And yesterday, at the official launch to find a bone marrow donor for Matt, two more stars of the Northampton sporting scene threw their weight behind the campaign.

Northamptonshire Cricket Club batsman, Stephen Peters said: "From my point of view it is a real eye-opener because you tend to think becoming a donor involves a lot of needles and blood tests and actually there is no excuse not to come along.

"It is pain free and it probably take five minutes."

Cobblers star, Andy Holt, said he was surprised how easy and painless it was to be tested and how simple it now was to give bone marrow.

The footballer said: "I think it is absolutely vitally important the Saints as well as the football club and the cricket club support this.

"Giving bone marrow is now just a longer process of giving blood and I think if people knew that they would be much more willing to put themselves forward."