Race against time for brave teenager battling leukaemia

Saints back donor drive to save Matt



■ **Northampton Saints stars Ben Foden, Courtney Lawes, Shane Geraghty, Chris Ashton and Dylan Hartley give their support to the campaign to find a bone marrow donor for Northampton School for Boys pupil, 15-year-old Matt Herbert** *Submitted picture*

By John Harrison
Chronicle Reporter
john.harrison@northantsnews.co.uk

A LEUKAEMIA expert has urged as many people as possible to join the bone marrow register and help save the life of a Northampton schoolboy.

Matt Herbert, aged 15, is desperately in need of a lifesaving bone marrow transplant as he battles leukaemia in hospital.

Doctors have so far failed to find Matt, pictured right, a Year 10 pupil at Northampton School for Boys, a transplant match.

Yesterday, as reported in the *Chron*, a campaign backed by Northampton Saints, the Cobblers and Northamptonshire County Cricket Club was launched to find him a donor.

The Matt's Match campaign is organising a series of donor sessions across Northampton to find a suitable donor.



David Knights, director of communication for the Anthony Nolan Trust, said the process of being tested was as simple as spitting in a cup.

He said: "If you are not on the register then you are obviously never going to come up as a match.

"You might be the only person who can save Matt's life but if you are not on the register we will never find you."

He also said there are myths about how hard it is to give bone marrow if a match is identified.

Giving bone marrow now takes about four hours and is no more painful than giving blood.

Mr Knights said: "A lot of people tend to think giving bone marrow will be painful we will have to go into the bone and that is just not the case. The most common complaint is that it is a bit boring."

Matt, a talented rugby player at Old Northamptonians, was first diagnosed with leukaemia in December 2008.

After going into remission doctors then found the leukaemia had returned at a routine check-up in September.

Gary Hammersley, who is helping to run the Matt's Match appeal, said the teenager is now facing a race against time to find a bone marrow match.

He said: "Chemotherapy won't help Matt in the long term. He needs a transplant."

Asked how Matt and his parents, Kevin and Glenda, are feeling, Gary, a family friend, said: "It is every parent's worst nightmare and they are in the middle of that nightmare.

"They are now completely reliant on somebody coming forward who is a match for Matt."

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



For information about how you can help the appeal, log on to