Rugby Honours Father's Efforts

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Dave Hulme from Sale says he still can't believe the most powerful man in rugby union has invited him to lunch at Twickenham Stadium next month…

RFU President Peter Baines heard about Dave's volunteering work and wanted to meet a man who has turned a tragic personal loss into a powerful force for good.

Losing a child is what every parent fears most and it happened to Dave and his wife Nicola five and a half years ago when their eldest son, Alex, died of a rare form of cancer. He was 12.

The couple and their youngest son Matt formed the Alex Hulme Foundation as a lasting legacy to recognise the courage and bravery their boy had shown during his illness, but also because he would have wanted to help others too. And to date it has raised £316,000 to develop research into Non-Hodgkin Lymphoma* in children.

Dave (55) and a senior manager at Tameside Hospital says he and Nicola were naturally concerned about Matt who was just eight and missing his big brother.

"We needed an interest for him and, as he was showing early signs of a talent for rugby, we signed him for our local club Sale FC. Being new and unknown to most people at the Club we purposely kept our personal situation to ourselves. This allowed us to deal with our grief in new surroundings and in private. This also allowed Matt to forge his own identity rather than just being known as Alex Hulme's brother. He grew in confidence, learned the values of the sport and made new friends just as we did," explains Dave.

In 2014 Sale Rugby Club adopted Alex's Foundation as its chosen charity and the sport and the Club have become a massive part of the family's lives.

Last year Dave won a special award for his tireless efforts in both team management and recruitment within the community, and for his unwilting support of Sale FC.

He was nominated to meet the RFU President by Michael Barnes and Cheshire RFU, who say: "Dave is usually the chap on the side line of our Under14 matches with the flag in his hand, spare whistle, team sheet and tackle count in his pocket. If you're looking for the epitome of a role model, Dave is definitely your man."

Karen James, Chief Executive at Tameside and Glossop Integrated Care NHS Foundation Trust, which runs Tameside Hospital, adds: " As a mum myself I can't begin to imagine what Dave and his family have been through. Yet, despite it all he works tirelessly to improve the lives of our patients while fundraising to support research through his Foundation in memory of his son."

Dave is invited to take one guest with him to the exclusive lunch and he says Nicola is happy to step down in favour of 13-year old Matt. " The sport has played a massive part in his development as a young man as well as a rugby player. And he's as proud as we are to see Alex's name emblazoned on the back of the blue and white shirt he pulls on for the team. It's going to be such an honour for us both," he adds.

For more information please contact Dave direct on 07970 474873 or info@alexhulmefoundation.co.uk or Susan Osborne on 07836 229208.

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