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## race2recovery : anthony harris

BY: JOSH  
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Anthony Harris is one of the founders of [Race2Recovery](#) – a charity he set up to help rehabilitate wounded servicemen and women on their way to participate in the world famous Dakar Rally. A below the knee amputee himself, the result of a roadside explosion in Afghanistan, he picked himself up, dusted himself down and started something really quite incredible. Josh Jones had a chat to him about stuff (and felt quite inadequate).

### Why did you set up [Race2Recovery](#)?

Because I didn't feel like I had enough excitement in my life to date, what with operations and everything before that. I felt that it was important to get back into doing being a team again and to do something pretty special. After you've been knocked back a bit, it's pretty key to boost your morale. It hadn't been done before and it's the hardest race in the world, so it's a pretty incredible thing to try and do.

### Who's involved with it?

We've got a 28-strong team that was deployed. There are a lot of people working behind the scenes in the UK. 50% of the people deployed were very seriously injured on operations – either shot or blown up and the remainder were people who have a background or experience in motor sport and that sort of thing. It was a pretty mixed team. Me and Tom, who's a triple amputee, actually started it off and then I recruited my best friend Matt who brought a huge amount to his role and was absolutely brilliant. That's kind of how it was born. Our team manager is an old Sergeant Major from the Medics who had been blown up in a suicide bomb attack in Afghanistan and got involved in the logistical side of things. It's a really varied team. It grew quite slowly and then it just took off last year.

Our first ever race was featured on Top Gear, then we went out to Morocco to train. One of the things I noticed when starting up was the diversity in sand. We had to go to Morocco to retrain. I can safely say that if we hadn't done that we couldn't have done the Dakar.

### What happened at the Dakar Rally?

It was a really difficult race, but an amazing mix of things. It's unlike any other race in the world – everyone's in the same boat, so everyone kind of helps each other and it was pretty special to be part of that. I suppose that once you're in it you're on your own. You're in the car for such an astonishing amount of time of the day – you can't let your concentration wane at any point. That was very interesting. And also when you're racing along at Mach 10, you're confronted with the most wonderful scenery that you'll ever see in your life. It's not like a circuit race going around and around the same course for an hour and half. It's driving with precision over 16 hours a day. I think two of our guys, Matt and Barney spent over 48 hours in the car.

### Was sand a problem?

Yeah definitely. With below the knee amputees less so, but obviously you haven't got the dexterity of an ankle so balance when you're out in the desert trying to do things with a lot less balance. We compensated for that by just going for it and hoped for the best.

### Was overheating a big problem – does your body make less blood?

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It wasn't too bad for me, if I'm honest. But for the above the knee amputees it really was and keeping them cool was a big part of what we had to do. We had to almost over hydrate them and get them energy drinks and counter act any salt deficiency and at the same time keep cold rags or whatever on them and keep them moist. Little things to keep the temperature down. It was all right though. As we were at 4900 metres a couple of guys got altitude sickness so we had to watch the oxygen and it was actually pretty cold.

**Was the hot and cold desert temperature a bit of a nightmare? Or actually you're all from the army – you're trained for that!**

Exactly – that made a difference to be honest.

**Where next for you guys?**

We're now talking to our sponsors about the 2014 Dakar, about perhaps widening the team, getting some new people on board who have never had the opportunity to experience it, as it is such an amazing experience. It also gives hope and inspiration to other people who are going through a similar recovery that they can go out and achieve these things. They might not want to go and do Dakar, but they can say, "those guys did it, I can do what I want to do," and not let their injury hold them back and have that possibility in their life.

**Can people get involved and help in any way?**

If they go on our [website](#) or [facebook](#) and get in touch that way, that's always appreciated. We'd love people to do some fundraising for Tedworth House or Help For Heroes that makes a big difference or if anyone wants to do some training or work experience with the guys, irrelevant of it being motor sport. The legacy of what we're trying to achieve is to get more people into employment and the more we can do that then the more people like me have something to look forward to in life and have something to focus and concentrate on.

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