



Chairman Biography

Chairman of Tarka Storm Rugby League Football Club

Neil Edwards

37 year-old Neil, who lives in Braunton, North Devon joined the Army at the age of 16 and has served all over the world including Northern Ireland, Norway, Brunei, Iraq and Afghanistan.

During Neil's early Army career he found the joy of playing Rugby Union and League for his unit. Over years of playing, Neil began representing The Royal Corps of Signals and The Army in Rugby Union. Neil preferred playing Rugby League and during his tenure in London he join West London Sharks RL (London Chargers) where he was coached by former Parramatta Eels player Mark Barnes. Unfortunately Neil's time in London came to end in 2007.

March 2013 Neil was deployed on Operational tour to Afghanistan as part of Operation Herrick 18. He was attached to The Royal Highland Fusiliers, 2nd Battalion The Royal Regiment of Scotland, B Company.

After returning from Operation Herrick 18 in September 2013 Neil's wife, Rebecca, noticed worrying changes in Neil. After weeks of torture and Rebecca begging him to see a doctor Neil sought help. In March 2014 Neil was officially diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) a few months later he was also diagnosed with tinnitus.

Due to various work and health commitments Neil did not pick up a Rugby League ball again until 2015. Neil lived in Aldershot at the time and was given the opportunity to play Rugby League with the Guildford Giants under the coaching of Jean-Valery Garcia. It was during this time that the club decided to rebrand and Surrey Sharks were born. Neil became part of the committee whilst continuing to play. Due to sustaining multiple injuries to his hand Neil felt it was best to hang up his boots for a while.

During some time off work in August 2016 Neil unfortunately suffered a PTSD relapse putting him in a world of pain for days and led to multiple frightening flashbacks. He was places on long-term sick leave in December 2016, pending a medical discharge. During early 2017 Neil was diagnosed with dissociative seizures (PNES). Neil was medically discharged from the Army 1st November 2017.

During the process of transitioning out of the Army Neil decided to utilise this time reigniting his passion for Rugby especially Rugby League. After some in depth research Neil discovered that North Devon once held a Rugby League club but unfortunately it had folded. Neil saw the opportunity to re-establish a Rugby League club within North Devon and sought guidance and advice from The Rugby Football League along with the varying Rugby League clubs within Devon and Cornwall. Tarka Storm RLFC was born and will be part of the 2018 South West Championship.

Since a young age Neil has had a passion for surfing, he has been fortunate to surf in a variety of locations leisurely and as part of The Army Surf Team. Neil found that surfing gave him a sense of temporary freedom from his injuries and In 2017 he competed in the first ever Inland Adaptive Surf Competition at Surf Snowdonia, proudly finishing in Third place. Neil's love of the water is shared with his eldest daughter, Molly, the pair seek any opportunity to spend time together in the shore line for Neil to teach and pass on his surfing abilities.

<http://www.northdevongazette.co.uk/news/chivenor-serviceman-ptsd-surfing-1-5195375>

<http://www.mirror.co.uk/lifestyle/health/desperate-former-soldiers-suffering-ptsd-11468895>

<https://www.surfsnowdonia.com/help-for-heroes-adaptive-surf-championships/>

