

DRIVER WOKE UPSIDE DOWN – PARALYSED

But now dad has learned to walk again and aims to ski for Great Britain in Paralympics

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ADAD who was left paralysed following a horror race crash has spoken about his “miraculous” recovery – which has led to him training to be selected for next year’s winter Paralympics.

Chris Lloyd, 43, who lives in Pontypridd, was driving the Ford Escort MK2 car with a navigator in September 2011 in Caerwent when they hit a sharp corner at speed.

The car flipped 10 feet into the air in the crash, sending it flying onto its roof and rolling more than 150 metres. The car then hit a tree and the impact left Chris’ spine “crushed” in places.

A panicked Chris woke up to find himself dangling and trapped upside down and unable to move his arms.

He said: “We came into a corner flat out but it wasn’t a flat-out corner. We were going too fast. I was trying to hold onto the steering wheel to regain control.

“The car left the road and flipped and landed about one and a half times the length of a rugby field away.

“It was upside down. A tree had hit the roof of the car. The roof came down and hit my neck and damaged my spinal cord.

“I woke up upside down. I was paralysed.



The rally car which flipped 10 feet into the air and rolled 150 metres, seriously injuring Chris Lloyd

My hands were hanging down but I couldn’t move anything from the neck down.

“The worst thing was being trapped in the car and waiting to be cut out.

“The only feeling I had was I wanted to get out.”

Dad-of-two Chris had to wait nearly two hours for rescue teams to finish cutting him out of the wrecked car. His navigator escaped from the wreckage unharmed.

Chris was later told if he had been sitting just inches further over, his head would have missed the impact that gave him life-altering injuries.

He was rushed to hospital where doctors found serious damage to his spine. Weeks later they also found he had broken his back. They then delivered the devastating news to the active dad, who was also a keen skier, that he would likely never ski or drive a rally car again.

Chris spent three months in a hospital bed, paralysed from the neck down. Determined to prove doctors wrong, he started trying to learn to walk again in a “miraculous” sign of recovery and began to set his sights on hitting the slopes again. It was when he saw a poster for the 2012 Paralympic games in London that he started to dream of representing Great Britain in

the sport.

Just six years on he is skiing again and could be heading to Pyeongchang, South Korea, for next year’s winter Paralympic Games in March.

He said: “It was quite scary just not being able to move. But my physio gave me hope that we would get everything working again.

“When I left hospital I still had a long way to go. I could only walk a really short distance. I couldn’t get onto a chair or get up to the bed or the bath.

It was just 12 months after the accident that Chris put skis on again at the Tamworth Snowdome.

He said he was “just concentrating on getting to the bottom of the slope” and quickly found he would need to learn to ski again, something he first started doing at 14.

Chris also faces added challenges. The accident has left him with 60% less strength in his right leg and 50% less in the left. He tires more easily and struggles to concentrate.

But he has competed in several international competitions as a British Parasnowsport Skier in the Giant Slalom, Super Combined, Super-G and Downhill events.

He is now busy training for next year’s winter Paralympics and hopes to be selected for the GB team.

In a heartwarming twist Chris, who has been with his partner Jessica, 38, for 19 years, proposed to her from his hospital bed a week after the crash.

Happily, she said yes.

He said: “I was quite emotional when I was in hospital. It was just an emotion that came over me and I just asked.

“She was crying and said yes.”



Chris Lloyd is aiming to compete in the 2018 Paralympic Games
CAMERON HALL/ HOMELANDS

AROUND THE WORLD

Plane crash kills four

FOUR people were killed when a cargo plane crashed into the sea near Ivory Coast’s Abidjan airport.

Lieutenant Issa Sakho, commander of the military fire brigade, said four Moldovan people were killed and two Moldovan people and four French citizens injured.

He said 10 people were aboard the plane that was arriving from the capital of neighbouring Burkina Faso yesterday.

A French spokesman says the plane was carrying French military cargo.

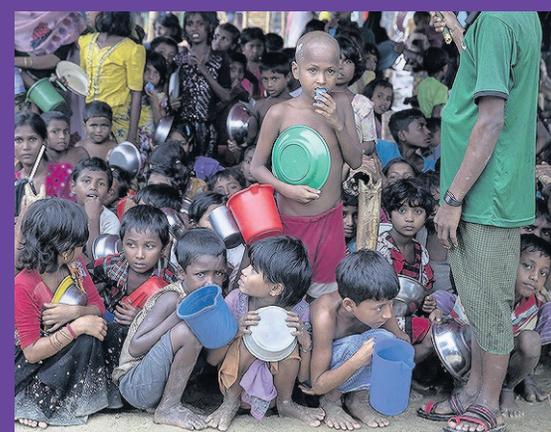
Catalan call for unity

ONE of Catalonia’s top separatist leaders pushing for a break from Spain has called for unity.

Oriol Junqueras, Catalonia’s regional vice president and head of the Republican Left party, said yesterday: “We must preserve the unity that is necessary to go all the way on this path to a republic.”

The leaders of the prosperous northeastern region of 7.5 million people want to leave Spain.

Fissures have appeared among Catalan separatists ever since regional President Carles Puigdemont announced on Tuesday that he was delaying an outright declaration of independence “for a few weeks” for talks with Spain’s central government in Madrid.



Children wait for hot food given out by a Turkish aid group at Palongkhali refugee camp, Cox’s Bazar, Bangladesh. According to UN sources around 519,000 Rohingya refugees have fled across the border from Myanmar to Bangladesh since August 25. Thousands more remain stranded in Myanmar

California still blazing

DESPERATE fire-fighting in California’s wine country brought a glimmer of hope as crews battling the flames reported their first progress.

The scale of the disaster also became clearer, as authorities said the fires had chased an estimated 90,000 people from their homes and destroyed at least 5,700 homes and businesses. The death toll rose to 35.

Seventeen large fires were still burning at the weekend north of the state, with more than 9,000 firefighters attacking the flames using air tankers, helicopters and more than 1,000 fire engines.

Raqqa IS is ‘cut off’

THE US-led coalition fighting the Islamic State terror group says militants remaining in the Syrian city of Raqqa are likely to have only small arms left to fight for the sliver of land they still control.

The coalition said on Saturday that IS fighters still in Raqqa were completely cut off from their leadership and probably had only pistols, rifles, light machine guns and a dwindling supply of ammunition.

Despite this assessment, the coalition says it expects difficult days ahead until Raqqa, once the militants’ de facto capital, is retaken.