WALT retrieve information from non-fiction (R9) and identify how language, structure and presentation contribute to meaning (R13).

Olympic Torch Relay, Day 52

In the seventy days before the start of the London 2012 Olympics, the Olympic torch made an 8,000 mile journey around the British Isles. 8,000 people were lucky enough to carry the torch for part of this journey. In this article, Matt King, one of the torchbearers, tells his story.

I'll be carrying the Olympic torch through Dunstable early on Monday morning, before eight o'clock, so hopefully the weather will have improved. I'm massively looking forward to it, of course.

I could never have foreseen how my life was going to pan out. Eight years ago I was playing rugby league for the London Broncos colts side. We travelled to Halifax one weekend, stayed overnight, and on Sunday I was paralysed from the neck down, making a tackle. As I lay on the ground I knew straightaway what had happened to me and, for a boy of 17, it was devastating.

I was in Stoke Mandeville hospital for nine months (the torch will visit Stoke Mandeville, birthplace of the Paralympic Games in 1948, shortly after I've done my leg of the relay) and found myself at a crossroads. I could either give up, or try to rebuild my life. So I went back to school and finished my A-levels, then went to the University of Hertfordshire, where I got a first-class degree in law. Now I work for a City law firm, where I have a training contract, working with clients with spinal and brain injuries. They are quite complicated cases and I can have empathy with them.

This has been a surreal month for me. A few weeks ago a very official-looking letter dropped through my door box. It looked serious and I thought it may be about my tax. It was from the prime minister's office, telling me that I'd been given an OBE*. It came out of the blue and is a tremendous honour; when I told my mum, she cried. The honour was, I suppose, for my charity work with people with spinal injuries. But I've not consciously looked for recognition. I've just tried in the last eight years since that fateful day to live as normal life as possible.

I know I won't be the last person to be paralysed in a sporting accident. It was a freak incident, and no one's fault – I don't hold any grudges. I knew rugby had its risks, but you just think that accident is going to happen to someone else. I still follow rugby league and rugby union, though; in fact I got my RFU coaching badges after the accident and went back to my old union club in Biggleswade to coach the youngsters. They were great, but I found it tough as it emphasised what I couldn't do anymore.

Today will be great, though: a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, and recognition for my family, friends and all those strangers who have helped me after those dark times in 2004.

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Glossary

OBE — Order of the British Empire, a special award for outstanding services to the community