

Injured mountain biker dragged himself for hours to safety

By Mahvash Ali

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Newlywed drags himself for 2 hours to send wife goodbye text after breaking leg in smash.

A badly injured mountain biker with a broken leg dragged himself in agony for two hours through the bush to get cellphone coverage and call for help.

But when he finally found coverage he sent a goodbye text to his newly wed wife.

Nelson man Vaughan Watson is still reeling from the accident which left him alone and fighting for his life for 10 hours.

Mr Watson was riding on a familiar biking trail on a hill on Saturday visible from his work and home, when he rode over a slippery patch and slammed into a tree stump. The impact broke his shin bone and dislocated his knee.

"I was only half way through my ride, there was no way someone could have known for hours that I needed help," Mr Watson told the *Herald* from his hospital bed tonight.

Doubled over in pain, the first person the avid mountain biker thought of was his newlywed wife Danielle Watson. He wanted to let her know about his condition.

However, when he pulled out his phone there was no reception.

"I dragged myself using my good leg for two hours to find a spot where I would get a bar on my mobile, but it kept disappearing every 5-7 minutes. I kept hauling myself to a better spot. I was so close to home."

Mrs Watson finally received his text message she froze in her tracks.

"His message was a call for help, but also a goodbye. I was shocked but I knew I had to stay calm so I could help him."

While her husband battled the cold and tried to remain alert despite the pain, Mrs Watson was on the phone incessantly as she helped rescue workers locate him.

By the time Mr Watson heard the buzzing of a rescue helicopter over his head, his phone had already run out of battery.

"I was very cold and I knew the helicopter couldn't find me, it is a very dense location, I knew I should have been carrying an emergency locator beacon."

The secondary school teacher said a smile was the only thing he had the energy for when rescue volunteers walked up to him in the early hours of Saturday morning.

"I was really happy to see them coming towards me. I am really happy to be alive, that was the thought on my mind for some time, but I guess the reality of recovery is also starting to set in."

Rescuers carried him for at least a kilometre out of the thick forest before he was flown by rescue helicopter to Nelson Hospital.

Mrs Watson saw her husband three hours after he was rescued.

- NZ Herald