Kevin Hansen’s Road to recovery

*During the Crazy Race of the Season 2 opener in NEOM, Kevin Hansen suffered a serious back injury behind the wheel. Two months on from cracking vertebrae 8 and being airlifted to hospital, the popular Swede is back behind the wheel of a racing car again and closing in on a return to competitive action. In a revealing interview, the JBXE driver details his recollections of the injury, his recovery and how he is still desperate for a maiden Extreme E victory.* **Extreme E: Firstly, it has been great to see you back behind the wheel of a racing car recently. How did that feel for you?**

**Kevin Hansen, JBXE:** It was really nice! There were some initial mixed feelings because I was a little bit nervous, but the doctors had given me the green light to get back in the car. I’ve had plenty of time to build up to it. It was such a good feeling to get going again and slide around on track – it felt very natural.

I had a good feeling from all of my runs and really enjoyed it, especially the feeling of going fast. It was a little bit scary to go over the jumps in the beginning, but I did it over and over again and I felt fine.

The doctor said if anything I should be stronger than before because it has over-healed itself – like the body always does. It was amazing to get back out there.

It was like I didn’t have to think when I got back in the car – it all felt so natural despite not having driven for a couple of months. Once I got the power down, had some rotations and got it sliding, it was like I had never been away.

I was perhaps a little bit rusty and not completely perfect out there, but the first test was not really about that. It was about getting some kilometres under my belt and feeling how my back responded to it. It was really positive!

**XE: That’s great to hear. Looking back to NEOM, can you tell us a little bit about the injury you suffered?**

**KH:** The injury was a crack to vertebrae 8 – it moved from being shaped like a square to that of a triangle.

With Extreme E, we have two different drivers in the car of different sizes. My teammate Molly [Taylor] had an insert in her seat and I didn’t, and that compression in the final downhill run in NEOM meant that my hips were not fully fixed to the seat. When I moved forward, the weakest point of my body going over any jumps was my back. My hip moved a bit and it compressed my top vertebrae, which led to the crack.

I’ve been through worse compressions previously when competing in Rallycross, but just catching the wrong part of terrain at the wrong time was a bit too much and that caused the injury.

I experienced huge, incredible pain almost immediately and I knew I had broken my spine straight away. I had no doubt about that – I also heard the crack and it was really loud! I could feel it directly.

The first thing I did in the car was check that I could feel my legs. I tried to move them around and was relieved when I knew I could still feel them.

Then it was a long painful drive back to the Switch Zone on the speed limiter – we were still leading the Crazy Race at that moment don’t forget!

I was on the radio to the team saying that I had hurt my back, but we were in front and in my mind, I was still thinking about that knowing I had to get out of the car to help us on course.

**XE: It is amazing that in spite of the impact you still had the capacity to think about the race and your team’s chances of victory on track. How do you recall feeling once you had got out of the car?**

**KH:** I jumped out due to all of the adrenaline I guess. I was really scared as I know these injuries are extremely serious. I didn’t know just how bad it was at that time – whether it was fully compressed or something totally different. I just knew that the pain was crazy! It was a shooting pain right up into my chest as well.

I got some treatment really quickly and medication to ease the pain and get control over everything.

Since then, my recovery has been all about staying stable to allow for my spine to recover and heal. More recently, I have been able to move more freely as a result which has been great.

**XE: What treatment did you receive as part of your rehabilitation, both immediately after the accident and upon leaving NEOM?**

**KH:** The treatment in Saudi Arabia was great. I was immediately taken to a helicopter with the emergency services – I felt really safe from the beginning and I was really well looked after. When I arrived at the hospital, there were doctors absolutely everywhere in the room! They had to do their job and were really thorough in checking me over. I was then told there was a crack in one of the vertebras but that I would heal and recover from it after a period of time.

I had a few nurses taking care of me, too, day and night, and I was given the time to recover and get my energy back. I took my first steps after the injury in the hospital in Saudi Arabia, too, which was a big moment. I was given a high level of help which was good to feel confident in the early stages.

I then flew home before starting my rehab directly with the Red Bull Athlete Performance Center (APC). It was really hard work there, where I mainly focused on my mobility – I still had my brace on at this point, so I was concentrating on flexing and latterly exercises with the brace to start building up my core movements.

Before starting rehab at the Red Bull APC, I made sure I was always walking at home to ensure I was consistently moving whenever I could – so long as I wasn’t in pain.

This allowed me to keep the blood flowing and help heal up my back as I wasn’t staying stiff. That definitely helped with my early rehab, while I was in the brace for four weeks.

There are so many talented people at Red Bull APC, while Red Bull also have their own spinal cord programme with ‘Wings for Life’ – I knew they would be the best people in the world to work with when it came to recovering from a back injury.

The physios, nutritionists and coaches were superb and I got help with just about everything that you could imagine in order to recover from the injury. It was all tailored and structured for my recovery.

**XE: It must have been a challenge to recover physically from such an injury, but what did you have to overcome from a mental perspective?**

**KH:** I got a lot of motivation after suffering this injury. I was really hungry to get back because I knew that without hard work I would never be as good as I was before. I really think that now I am so much more structured and much stronger mentally from this experience. I feel stronger despite being beaten down by what happened. When you take a hit you can get really low – especially when you cannot move or even sleep like you want to.

I had a lot of support from my friends and family which was really nice – I think they were more worried than I was! The support I received was great and I received so many messages which was incredible in the days after – even weeks after – which meant a lot. I had a lot of people get in touch which meant a great deal – it was also really motivational for me.

You can get really vulnerable and so you have to put in the hard work to get back. If I didn’t go out and walk, or didn’t go out to Austria to get the right support, no one else was going to do it for me. This has helped me a lot. Getting into the car for the first time was a big step and now it is about pushing myself even further to focus on my performance behind the wheel.

Going back to my physical condition following the accident, I feel almost stronger than before. This is also a real positive for me. I even managed to take part in the Wings for Life World Run last weekend - which was a great feeling!

**XE: It sounds like, in spite of what you have endured so far, we are going to see an even better Kevin Hansen for the rest of the season! What are the next steps in your recovery?**

**KH:** The next step is to build up my confidence in the car. I want to really feel 110% confident and get back to my performance levels from before. It is about strengthening those competition points and look at how I can improve things. It is about building up even further my physical and mental strength. I guess it is thanks to this injury that I feel this way!

As for Sardinia… I certainly still have some unfinished business with my Crazy Races. I am still desperate for my first win in Extreme E and I hope to be back for the double-header in July.

**ENDS**

**To learn more about Extreme E, visit -** [**www.Extreme-E.com**](http://www.extreme-e.com)

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**NOTES TO EDITORS**

**About Extreme E:**

Now in its second season, Extreme E is a radical off-road racing series, founded by the same team behind Formula E, which showcases electric SUVs and futuristic technologies in some of the world’s most remote and challenging environments.

This five-event global voyage utilises its sporting platform for the purpose of promoting electrification, environment and equality. The series’ goal is to highlight the impact of climate change in some of the world’s most endangered environments, promote the adoption of electric vehicles to pave the way for a lower carbon future, and provide a world-first gender-equal motorsport platform.

The first sport to ever be built out of a social purpose, Extreme E aims to minimise environmental impact while maximising awareness, racing in places that have already been damaged or affected by climate change or human interference and taking fans deep into the heart of the most pressing issues facing our planet’s future.

Not only that, but Extreme E is also helping the car industry to develop future-facing technology using racing as a platform for road innovation, which accelerates change ten-fold.

Season 2 Calendar:

NEOM, Saudi Arabia
19-20 February 2022
Sardinia, Italy
06-07 July 2022
Sardinia, Italy
09-10 July 2022
Antofagasta, Chile
24-25 September 2022
Punta del Este, Uruguay
26-27 November 2022

**About Continental Tires: Founding Partner and Official Tire Partner**
Continental develops pioneering technologies and services for sustainable and connected mobility of people and their goods. Founded in 1871, the technology company offers safe, efficient, intelligent, and affordable solutions for vehicles, machines, traffic and transportation.

The tyres business area has 24 production and development locations worldwide. Continental is one of the leading tyre manufacturers with more than 56,000 employees and offers a broad product range for passenger cars, commercial and special-purpose vehicles as well as two-wheelers. Through continuous investment in research and development, Continental makes a major contribution to safe, cost effective and ecologically efficient mobility. The portfolio of the tyres business area includes services for the tyre trade and fleet applications, as well as digital management systems for tyres.

Continental has developed a new high-performance tyre for Extreme E Season 2, redesigned to include the use of more sustainable materials. Each of the 30 tyres that Continental has supplied to all ten Extreme E teams now contains recycled polyester made from approximately 60 PET bottles.  In total, around a third of each second-generation CrossContact Extreme E tyre consists of recycled and renewable raw materials.

**About AFC Energy:**
Extreme E embarked on a world-first collaboration with AFC Energy, whose pioneering hydrogen fuel cell technology enables the Championship’s race fleet to be charged using zero-emission energy. Extreme E is the first event organiser to utilise hydrogen fuel cell power generators for charging, and the decision supports the series’ goal of being sustainable and creating minimal local impact on the environments in which it races.

AFC Energy has engineered a bespoke H-PowerTM fuel cell system for Extreme E, which has been designed with a clear specification and a focus on sustainable innovation. It offers a completely sustainable fuel production process, using water and sun to generate hydrogen power which is then used to charge all the ODYSSEY 21 e-SUVs off the grid. Not only does this process emit zero greenhouse emissions, but its only by-product is water, which is utilised elsewhere on-site.

**About CBMM: Founding Supplier**
CBMM | Niobium is a founding supplier of Extreme E and the Championship’s official Niobium Technology Supplier and Chassis Technology Supplier.

Critical to the automotive sector, niobium produces stronger, lighter and more sustainable cars with better energy efficiency. Its technologies are already widely applied in different areas, including light-weighting, safety, emissions reduction and electronics that will help lead to a sustainable sector transformation. Key applications of niobium in the Mobility sector include chassis, brakes and exhaust systems, drivetrains, batteries and EV charging stations and any number of ancillary components. Its qualities mean materials can be made lighter, stronger, more robust and more reliable – all while being more sustainable than other materials.

CBMM offers technical innovation to customers around the globe through a team of over 2,000 highly trained, dedicated professionals providing cutting-edge niobium products and technology to over 400 clients in around 40 countries.

**About LuisaViaRoma: Official Fashion Partner**
Defined by the Financial Times as “a haven for directional fashion,”[LUISAVIAROMA.COM](https://gbr01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Furl6.mailanyone.net%2Fv1%2F%3Fm%3D1l40NA-00039a-3X%26i%3D57e1b682%26c%3D195AVmsnACejGQbj8XWTN7evBrvKJ1dnbRSlGauikIN1jvOJqayL11c08sfz5q1cceT_kfGhbO_Pgdul_vKgCHKD7IRSCNz5N1nGW9IZudTMsArXH_4RgkZJ_1yUJ1LCnfuAdJA1-KMInD6ZezFTWMgr389RpxOBDTwby2-m0iGBYpmPZjv9wwqhM1MxBH243uOw61cdEjXAR5FWvZyEV-xrW9U-ZTO-2PYSpSwfH4s&data=04%7C01%7CCarla.Corbet%40mpacreative.com%7C0caf6dd47e0f4a1eab8908d8c127765b%7C3891b9e18f6b4fe3a38ee5305dc2823a%7C1%7C0%7C637471722513203463%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000&sdata=jOWRp6eyKk%2BAXQzlhUUINtGvz6Jil8elRhPIOfB8uOY%3D&reserved=0) is the top online luxury fashion destination with 5,000,000 visitors per month and worldwide shipping. With each new season, the website presents the collections of more than 600 established designers and young emerging talents.

**About Zenith: Official Timekeeper and Founding Partner**
Zenith exists to inspire individuals to pursue their dreams and make them come true – against all odds. Since its establishment in 1865, Zenith became the first watch manufacture in the modern sense of the term, and its watches have accompanied extraordinary figures that dreamt big and strived to achieve the impossible – from Louis Blériot’s history-making flight across the English Channel to Felix Baumgartner’s record-setting stratospheric free-fall jump. Zenith is also highlighting visionary and trailblazing women – past and present – by celebrating their accomplishments and creating in 2020 its first-ever collection dedicated entirely to them, Defy Midnight.

With innovation as its guiding star, Zenith features exceptional in-house developed and manufactured movements in all its watches. Since the creation of the El Primero in 1969, the world’s first automatic chronograph calibre, Zenith has gone on to master fractions of the second with the Chronomaster Sport and its 1/10th of a second precision and the DEFY 21 with a precision of 1/100th of a second.

**About Allianz: Founding Partner and Official Insurance Partner**
The Allianz Group is one of the world's leading insurers and asset managers with more than 100 million private and corporate customers in more than 70 countries. Allianz customers benefit from a broad range of personal and corporate insurance services, ranging from property, life and health insurance to assistance services to credit insurance and global business insurance. Allianz is one of the world’s largest investors, managing around 790 billion euros on behalf of its insurance customers. Furthermore, our asset managers PIMCO and Allianz Global Investors manage 1.7 trillion euros of third-party assets.

**About Vodafone Business: Official Technology and Communication Partner**

With expertise in connectivity, global scale and the leading IoT platform, Vodafone Business is a leading technology communications company helping organisations succeed in a digital world and keeping society connected. Vodafone’s purpose is to connect for a better future, enabling an inclusive and sustainable digital society, and many of its solutions have sustainability and inclusivity embedded.

Unique in its scale as the largest pan-European and African technology communications company, Vodafone transforms the way we live and work through its innovation, technology, connectivity, platforms, products and services. Vodafone operates mobile and fixed networks in 21 countries, and partners with mobile networks in 52 more. As of 31 December 2021, they had over 300m mobile customers, more than 28m fixed broadband customers and over 22m TV customers.

This collaboration will see Vodafone Business leading innovations and capabilities such as 5G, MPN, IOT and MEC, integrated into Extreme E’s global operations and will include full involvement in the purpose- driven elements of the series, with special prominence on Extreme E’s Legacy Programmes and the Science Laboratory on board the St Helena. Through its IOT solutions, Vodafone Business is helping sustainability efforts, including agriculture, forestation and decarbonisation of energy grids.

Find out more on <http://www.Vodafone.com/business> and follow Vodafone on its social media channels:

Twitter: @VodafoneGroup

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**About Neat Burger: Official Plant-based Partner**
Neat Burger is the first of its kind – the planet-friendly, plant-based, full-flavoured game-changer the world has been waiting for. The world’s first plant-based sustainable burger chain, Neat Burger offers a menu that appeals to not only those who follow plant-based diets, but anyone, meat-eaters included, who wants to eat delicious meat-free dishes that are more sustainable, healthier and ethical.

The brand is backed by seven-time FIA Formula One World Champion Lewis Hamilton, in collaboration with hospitality organisation The Cream Group and investors, as well as UNICEF Ambassador and early backer of Beyond Meat Tommaso Chiabra. Neat Burger opened its first site in September 2019, just off Regent Street in London, and its second and third dine-in outlets at Camden Market and Soho in 2020. Plans for global expansion across Europe, the US and Middle East are already in place.

**About EY: Official Innovation Partner**
EY is a global leader in assurance, tax, strategy, transaction and consulting services. The insights and quality services they deliver help build trust and confidence in capital markets and in economies the world over. EY develops outstanding leaders who team to deliver on our promises to all of our stakeholders. In so doing, they play a critical role in building a better working world for their people, for their clients and for their communities.

EY originally joined the Championship to help Extreme E achieve its commitment of minimizing the overall footprint whilst creating a positive legacy. In collaborating with Extreme E, EY has become a vital part of creating an Environment Impact Assessment framework which further drives the championship in the direction of positive change. Whilst Extreme E strives to race without leaving a trace, the framework provided by EY has allowed the championship to minimize its environmental impact across each race location. Both prior and post-racing impact assessments have allowed Extreme E to strategically plan their actions within these areas.

**About INTERprotección: Official Insurance Broker**
INTERprotección is composed of a group of Mexican insurance, reinsurance and surety bond brokerage companies. With global presence and recognition, INTERprotección has more than 40 years of experience in management and comprehensive risk consulting in the Mexican market. Its business model is focused on bringing the client to the forefront and offering them the best service through innovative and disruptive products, more recently with its new brand [inter.mx](https://inter.mx/), its insurance digital platform that is transforming the insurtech game.

**About Enel X Way: Official Smart Charging Partner**Enel X Way is the Enel Group's new global business line entirely dedicated to electric mobility. Currently, Enel X Way manages approximately 320,000 charging points, both directly and through interoperability agreements in place worldwide1. As a global platform for e-mobility, the company is focused on developing flexible charging technologies and solutions to improve the customer experience by supporting the electrification of transport for consumers, businesses, cities and public administrationsFind out more on <https://enelxway.it/en/home> and follow Enel X Way on its social media channels:LinkedIn: Enel X Way

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1 Public and private charging points, including points of interoperability.