

# THE TIGER BATTALION FLAG IS UNFURLED AT THE SOUTH POLE

On 1 December 2013 Virgin Money South Pole Allied Challenge set out to reach the South Pole, Antarctica. After two years of planning, a year of selection and training which spanned 5 continents, a logistical plan involving 2.5 tonnes of equipment, aircraft which were built in 1948, four 'pimped' Toyota Hilux support trucks, twelve wounded from four different countries, a film crew and a total expedition of 32 people embarked on racing as three teams to the South Pole.



Seamus proudly displays the 5th Battalion Flag at the South Pole.

The expedition concluded on Friday, December 13th, when twelve wounded servicemen and women successfully reached the South Pole after crossing 125 miles of Antarctic plateau. Along with their expedition patron, Prince Harry, and various other coaches and mentors, the soldiers pushed their physical and mental limits to transcend barriers throughout an arduous 13 days in some of the toughest conditions known to man.

The expedition intended to bring a global awareness to the physical and cognitive injuries that servicemen and women face as a result of their courageous efforts to defend our countries, and shed light on the fact that they can conquer even the toughest of challenges despite the barriers they face.

The expedition, believed to be the largest ever to ski onto the South Pole, faced significant challenges from the start as severe weather conditions delayed the teams and reminded us why Antarctica is one of the most hostile places on our planet.

Joined by Prince Harry, the wounded servicemen and women from the UK, US, Australia and Canada trekked more than 200km through ice and snow, battling not just their wounds, but the biting winds and below freezing temperatures. All team members pushed themselves to their physical and mental limits throughout the grueling 13 days, the challenge ended when all members successfully reached the South Pole after crossing the Antarctic plateau.

One of the Team Members was CPL Seamus Donaghue, who served in Afghanistan, with 5RAR in 2010, following six years of service to the Australian Army. It was in Afghanistan that CPL Donaghue was wounded during an engagement with insurgents, sustaining a gunshot wound to his right thigh, resulting in a shattered femur and nerve damage to his leg. As a part of his rehabilitation, he has been doing a combination of cardio, weight, core strength, and flexibility training among other ac-

tivities, which he admits has been both a challenging and humbling experience.

CPL Donaghue did extensive preparation for this trek, including cold-weather training in Iceland, mountain trekking in Colorado and hiking and skiing in Norway,

“I felt proud to be involved in such a great Soldier On event because there are a lot of guys and girls who are mentally or physically injured as a result of operations and providing service to their country” he said. “Antarctica is a tough climate, and it was taxing on the body skiing for eight hours a day, in temperatures as low as -42C. But we did have a couple of nice days where the sun



**CPL Seamus Donaghue (front left) participates in the Welcome Home Parade in Darwin.**

was shining and it was only -28C. The challenges were mainly mental. We were physically capable so it was just a matter of cracking on and pushing through any barriers. We had a fantastic team that clicked during our training, which carried on in Antarctica as we supported each other.”

CPL Donaghue is currently posted to the Soldier Recovery Centre in Brisbane as a section commander.

When the expedition arrived at the South Pole CPL Donaghue proudly displayed the 5<sup>th</sup> Battalion flag, we believe that this is the first time any flag of the Regiment or of the Infantry Corps has been unfurled at this location.