

The ad we never expected to make

WHF Award Entry

How a near fatal moment on a football pitch led to the swift creation of a powerful media moment for the BHF that created 58,000 more potential life-savers who could make a difference when the unexpected happens.

Why we did what we did:

The British Heart Foundation (BHF) had no intention of advertising during Euro 2020.

Then, during Denmark's opening game vs Finland, the world witnessed the shocking collapse of Christian Eriksen – and the work of those who performed life-saving heroics on the pitch.

If a 29-year-old international footballer can suffer cardiac arrest on a global stage, then it can happen to anyone, at any time.

But most people don't have highly trained medical support teams immediately on hand, meaning less than 1-in-10 people in the UK survive a cardiac arrest.

In a moment when CPR was headline news, the BHF clearly had an important role it could play in driving more Brits to become potential life-savers.

So, we created a high-impact marketing and PR campaign that put the BHF's life-saving message right in the middle of the conversation.

What we did

Specially created to run before the kick-off of Denmark's next game – just 3 days later – we partnered with ITV, our ad-agency Saatchi & Saatchi and media agency PHD to conceive and create “The ad we never expected to make” - a powerful contextual moment of TV for the British Heart Foundation to deliver a vital “help save lives, by learning CPR” message.

Working with ITV, we created a 40 sec spot before the game, immediately after the section of the pre-match punditry where it was most likely that they would be talking about the incident and Eriksen's recovery.

We created a brand-new ad that used the context of Eriksen's collapse (but didn't refer directly to it) and recruited Vinnie Jones to deliver the voiceover (Jones starred in the BHF's most famous CPR campaign in 2013). He recorded the V/O in Australia, just minutes before boarding a long-haul flight.

Watch the ad >

This is the ad
that we never expected to make.

At 16:42 on Thursday June 16th – just 72 hours after the idea was conceived – “the Ad we never expected to make” was broadcast immediately after a 7-minute studio discussion led by BHF ambassador Graeme Souness, who discussed his own coronary heart disease experiences in context of Eriksen's collapse.

Watch the pundit in-coverage conversation >



Its impact was immediate, with the ‘help save lives by learning CPR’ message being amplified in PR and social media – including by some very famous footballing names (see right).



What we achieved

This entire partnership was delivered in just 3 days.

- The ad was seen live by 1.6m viewers
- 80 pieces of news and TV coverage featured the ad, reaching a further 20% of the UK population
- Visits to the BHF's ‘How to save a life’ website increased by 246% (especially impressive as BHF web visits had already increased massively around Eriksen's collapse 5 days earlier)
- In the week after the ad ran, BHF defibrillator and CPR kit sales increased +300%...
- ...and though the ad didn't prompt for donations, one-off donations increased by 17.4%

But most importantly – visits to the BHF's ‘How to save a life’ content since the transmission of the ad break have created 58,000 new potential life savers in the UK.

And as we all know, it only takes one of them to make a difference when the unexpected happens.