

Pass It On®...

For the Love of the Game.

Simon Keith was just 21 years old when he stood at the edge of life and death: He needed a heart transplant. Soon, though, the avid soccer player from Lewes, England, was determined to put his new heart to the test. Three years after the transplant, Keith became the first heart transplant recipient to play professional sports.

A gifted soccer player, born in Lewes, England, and raised on Vancouver Island, Simon Keith spent his youth chasing a ball and a dream. But that dream came to a shattering halt when doctors delivered a devastating diagnosis: cardiomyopathy, a degenerative heart disease.

Keith's heart — once strong enough to fuel 90-minute matches and sprints up and down the pitch — was failing. Fast. He needed a new heart. Not just to play again — but to survive.

At that time, in the mid-1980s, organ transplants were still in their infancy. Survival was uncertain. Life expectancy after such a surgery was short. And returning to elite athletics? That wasn't even in the conversation. No one in the world had done it. The message was simple: Be grateful to be alive. Leave the game behind. But Simon Keith didn't accept that narrative.

"I refused to be a broken athlete," he says. "I would not allow my transplant to define me."

Keith underwent a heart transplant at 21 years old, receiving the ultimate gift — a heart from a 17-year-old boy who had died playing soccer. That unspoken connection — the heart of one soccer player passed to another — became Simon's vow: to honor that young man by using this new life not as a finish, but as a starting whistle.

Recovery was grueling. Open-heart surgery leaves recipients unable to walk without pain, breathless after a few steps. The body must relearn everything — breathing, stretching, trusting itself again. For most patients, the end goal is normalcy. For Keith, it was the pro pitch. And then, against all odds, he did it.

But Keith's story didn't end there. An inconceivable 32 years later, long after he finished his professional career, he faced another impossible trial: his transplanted heart was failing. Again.

With a second new heart beating inside him, Keith began a new chapter — not on the field, but in the fight for others like him. In 2012, some 25 years after his first transplant, he founded the Simon Keith Foundation, a nonprofit dedicated to supporting youth organ transplant recipients and their families. Keith has literally lived on the generosity of others — and devoted every heartbeat since to repaying that debt with passion and action.

Have a Heart...[PassItOn.com](https://passiton.com)

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