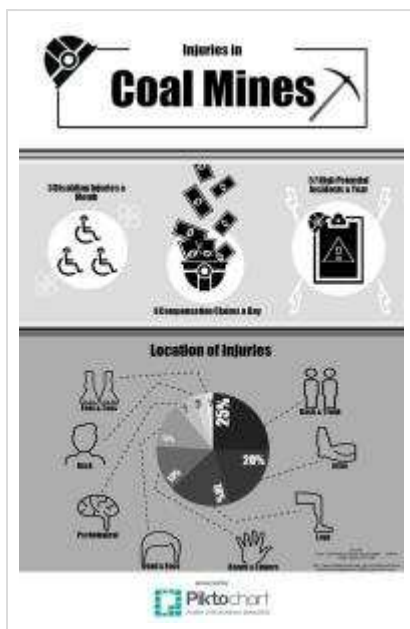


# goldeni2015

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## Nominee 11

Posted on **November 16, 2015**



IN a tunnel, three kilometres under the earth's surface, a man lay face down, crying for help with his legs trapped in a machine. He lay on the ground in the dirt filled with toxins. He's a coal miner. And it's a dangerous job.

In the small mining town of Tieri in Central Queensland, this tragedy unfolded for Brant 'Bugsy' North.

At the age of 22, Bugsy had grown up in Tieri and had become an aspiring footballer, loving father and great friend. Like most of the young men who had grown up there, Bugsy decided that after he graduated from school, he would pursue a career in the coal mines. A career which began at Oaky Creek No. 1 mine in 1997 at the age of 20 as a trainee miner.

"I went to the longwall underground and I was only there for 2 weeks and they decided to do a longwall move."

"I had never done a longwall move in my life so I was sort of in the dark about everything."

"I had a guy with me, Adam Clarke, who probably would have been underground twice in his whole life," Bugsy recalls.

The longwall, also known as the Armoured Face Conveyor (AFC), has two ends called the maingate and the tailgate with a steel chain conveyor running in between. Bugsy and Adam were located at the tailgate end of the AFC and were given instructions to unload equipment in preparation for the move.

"Our deputy (supervisor) told us to take the winches out of the basket and put them on top of the tailgate drive."

"I got up onto the tailgate a few more times to unload the winches and was getting down. I had one foot where the chain was and then the guys at the other end didn't know what I was doing or where I was, so they started the AFC and my foot has gotten caught under the chain," Bugsy said.

As Bugsy was dragged he got caught under the flight bars that push the coal along the conveyor. He was then dragged for seven metres.

"I just thought, this is it, it's all over."

"It stopped just by chance because they were getting roof bolts off at the other end, so I am lucky."

"I was probably about a foot away from being dragged underneath the shearer that cuts the coal."

After being trapped under the conveyor chain for five hours, the Flying Doctors Service got to Oaky No. 1 mine and decided to amputate both of his legs.

"I have only met him (the doctor) once since I had my accident and couldn't thank him enough because if he and the Miners' Rescue team hadn't have been there I would have died."

Dallace Luv, 32, was also injured in a coal mining accident on November 3 2002. It was the same mine.

"I was 19-years-old at the time and it was a strata failure (the roof and wall of the mine caved in) that caused my accident."

"I had multiple fractures to both legs with a large open compound wound to my left leg."

"While in surgery I had a blood clot which shut my lungs down resulting in me being placed into an induced coma for three weeks," says Dallace.

Dallace received extreme trauma from his accident where the mining company, M.I.M., was found 87 percent at fault. He still has night terror and has been on antidepressants ever since.

Unfortunately, Buggy and Dallace's stories aren't uncommon. Safework Australia has reported an average of seven deaths a year since 2007 while the rate of serious injuries are up 8.7 percent compared to all industries.

Jason Hill, Industry Safety and Health representative of the CFMEU Mining and Energy Division in Queensland, believes that safety is a low priority for mining companies. In many cases production overrules safety. Although Buggy and Dallace's cases were more than a decade ago, the issues prevail today.

"Safety within Queensland's underground coal mining industry is going backwards."

"The last 18 months has been the worst period since 1994. There have been four fatalities and a large amount of serious injuries, some that could have resulted in fatalities," says Mr Hill.

Not only are the figures for fatality and injury increasing, however the number of reported cases of bullying and harassment is also prominent. This forces miners to take shortcuts.

After Buggy's accident he underwent 20 operations and got down to 40 kilograms in weight. To this day he still has phantom pain that can last up to a week.

"There were a lot of contributing factors to the accident. If you take one thing out of the equation it probably wouldn't have happened."

"I was trying to get the job done as quickly as possible to move onto the next task."

"I didn't stop to think, if I get up here and this thing starts up that I'm going to get dragged," says Buggy.

Buggy and Adam's inexperience was found to be one of the contributing factors. Witnessing the incident changed Adam's perspective on mining safety, admitting that during this time he was naïve about the danger.

“That was the first time I had actually been to a longwall, so I was unfamiliar with emergency stop buttons and their locations.”

“But back then, depending on what mine you worked at, even simple things like wearing personal protective equipment wasn’t enforced.”

“But you never think anything is going to go wrong,” says Adam.

Although he was only in the coal industry for three years at the time of Bugsy’s accident, there was no doubt for him that he was going to continue his career in mining.

“In nearly 20 years of mining it has been the worst accident that I’ve seen.”

“It definitely made me aware and I became more safety conscious.”

Since the accident Bugsy has sought fulfilment through sport. He was selected in the Australian team for the 2000 Sydney Paralympics for Wheelchair Basketball. A game that has taken him all over the world.

“A lot of doors opened after the accident, I’ve done a lot of things and met a lot of people,” says Bugsy.

“It was a challenge trying to be with my family as well as learning what I could and couldn’t do in the wheelchair.”

“But you feel like you’ve been given a second chance in life.”



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7 THOUGHTS ON "NOMINEE 11"



Jane Corda

on **November 17, 2015 at 6:40 am** said:

Awesome and inspiring story for this young man

★ Like



Carolyn Dorward

on **November 17, 2015 at 9:18 am** said:

And amazing story about two great Tieri lads. Well written. .

★ Like



Brendan North

on **November 17, 2015 at 11:31 pm** said:

My brother has a huge heart and unbelievable strength to be able to get through everything,I believe the mines should be putting the workers health first and at top of the list,I believe enough is enough with workers having to go through any serious injuries,me and were very heart shattered to see Dallas go through what he did,it was bad enough for us to have go through with what we did,then having to see other families face that as well,and especially someone who is friends with the family,it something I have always hoped for,for no other families and workers to go through the trauma,pain and heart ache,I dearly hope they can really upgrade and improve on the safety and workers wellbeing,the mining companies need to take a good hard look at the situation in hand,and start doing something about it,because the mines have brought nothing but pain and misery to the family,especially Dallas and Bugs,and it's a nightmare they have to live with for the rest of there life.thankyou for the article and making others aware on what dangers could happen in the mining industry,very well written.

★ Like



doug cranston

on **November 18, 2015 at 7:09 am** said:

Always great to hear that story. Gives you a reminder how easily disasters can happen. I get so much out of the talks that Bugsy done on our training days. Its a real wake up. Need more of it.

★ Like



Rebecca Moore

on **November 18, 2015 at 10:44 pm** said:

You are an inspiration Bugys 😊

★ Like



Rachel Clancy

on **November 19, 2015 at 10:07 am** said:

Beautiful, well written story. One small way to highlight some of the dangers involved in the mining industry. Thank you for sharing your story.

★ Like



Kerri Egan

on **November 19, 2015 at 1:11 pm** said:

A powerful insight into the dangers of the mining industry. How far are they ( The Mining Magnates) prepared to go for the almighty dollar.

★ Like