



2018 Mountbatten Medal – Matthew Maroun

On Sunday, 21st January 2018, Umhlanga Rocks SLC junior lifesaver, Matthew Maroun, who had turned 17 just a month earlier, was relaxing at home on the Umdloti beachfront in South Africa. His dad, Anton, was scanning the stormy seas with his binoculars, as massive cyclone generated waves were pounding the coastline.

It was just after 13.45pm when Anton noticed a swimmer in distress, about 200 metres offshore and behind the backline. The swimmer was caught in a powerful rip current and was being swept out into the treacherous sea. He alerted Matthew to the plight of the swimmer, and Matthew immediately grabbed his Malibu board and sprinted 50metres across the beach and rushed into the 8 – 10-foot waves. Although lifeguards on the beach tried to whistle him to return to shore, he battled through the powerful surf, just escaping some huge waves, and eventually reached the exhausted swimmer, who was about 400 metres off the beach.

Realising that it would be too dangerous to attempt to negotiate his way back through the massive waves with the exhausted patient, Matthew stayed with the man until a rescue jet-ski arrived soon afterwards.

The victim was then loaded onto the jet-ski and taken back to shore. Matthew then returned to shore on his Malibu board, where the pro-lifeguards told him the surf was too big for them to attempt the rescue.

Matthew's immediate reaction and determination to get through the massive surf at this dangerous beach ensured that the swimmer was rescued before the angry sea could claim another victim.

Matthew showed exceptional skill and bravery in tackling the stormy sea, especially for one so young.

Matthew Maroun was awarded the 2018 Mountbatten Medal by RLSS Mountbatten Medal Committee and endorsed by RLSS Board of Trustees.