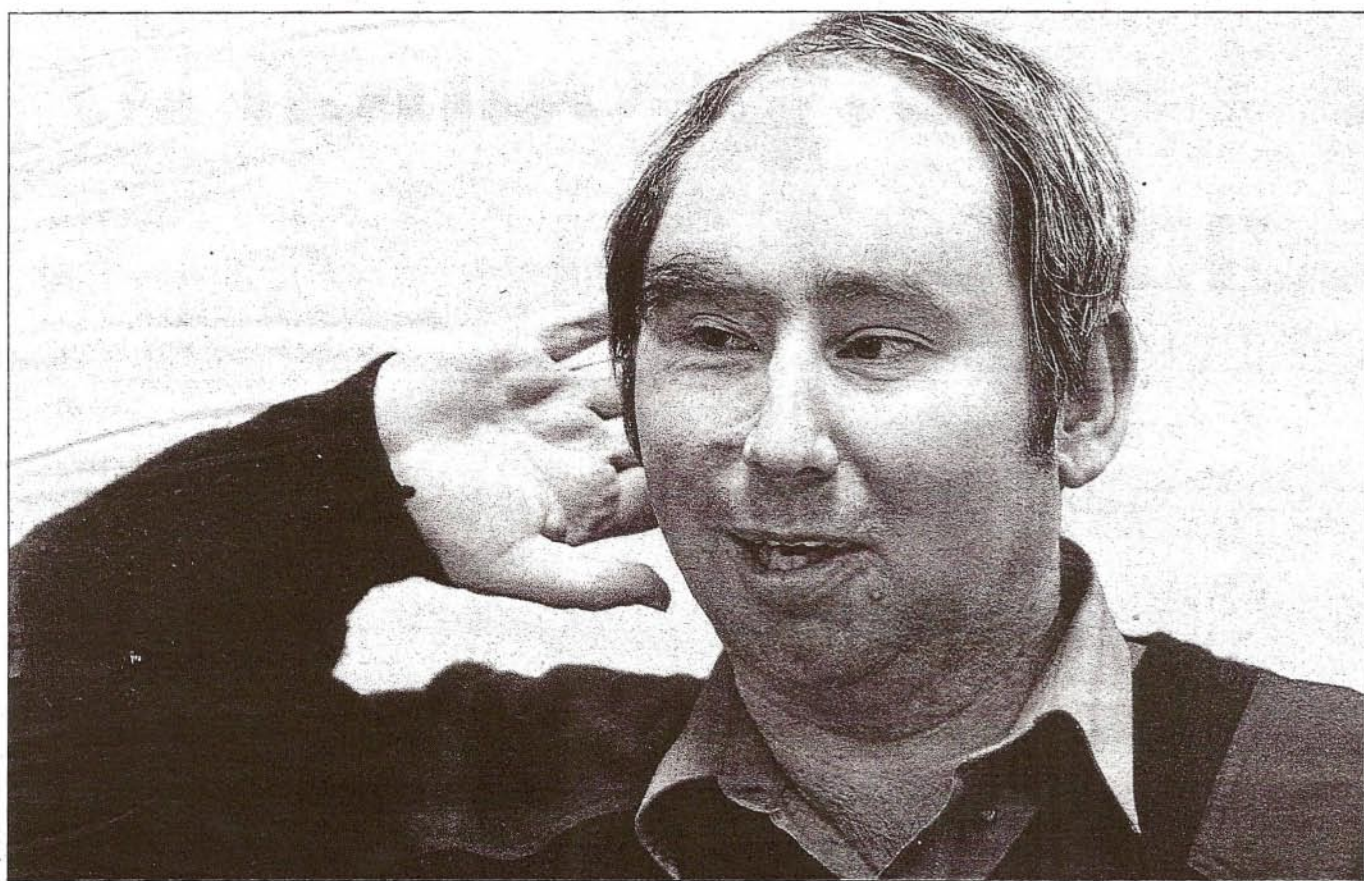


while speed and safety take centre stage



**TRAGIC TALE:** Matthew Woodberry talks to students about the acquired brain injury he has because of a car accident he was involved in when he was 19 years old. Picture: Grant Wells.

# Young driver's life takes a turn

By ANGE CLARK

THE introduction of the guest speaker at yesterday's Rotary Youth Driver Awareness session said it all.

Headway North-West manager Kate Moore introduced Matthew Woodberry to the group and emphasised the privilege of listening to him speak, as it is an emotionally intense exercise for him.

As the 29-year-old stood up, the students were fixated on him and stayed that way for his entire talk.

Mr Woodberry's life was headed in the right

direction.

He had a good job as a boilermaker/welder, a great bunch of friends and was in contention to represent Australia at the Olympics in his beloved sport of track cycling.

One mistake when he was 19 changed his life.

"It was back in 1999, I was driving way too quick and they had just widened the road," he said.

"I hit a telegraph pole, knocked it over and my car rolled.

"I was driving 200kmh — what an idiot."

As a result of the accident, Mr Woodberry has a

substantial acquired brain injury and still doesn't have complete use of the left side of his body.

"I have been told they didn't expect me to make it and they were sending me to Hobart for organ donation," Mr Woodberry said.

"They (doctors) said I would never walk or talk again."

While in intensive rehabilitation, Mr Woodberry had to re-learn absolutely everything.

"I had to learn to walk and talk again. I am privileged to be able to walk again.

"And to talk again, I have a good speech therapist.

"Everything changed, my entire life changed in a couple of minutes.

"A car is a privilege and you need to have respect for a car or it can really stuff your life up."

A talented rider in his teenage years, Mr Woodberry won many titles at the Mersey Valley Cycling Club.

And he certainly hasn't lost his competitive spirit.

With assistance, Mr Woodberry takes to the Devonport Oval each Friday.

"I have done 4770 laps of the oval and I have more to go yet," he said.

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