Emin Ruffati was 39 when he first felt chest pains. His wife, Jennifer, reassured him: “We’re about to have our first child, you’re turning 40, I expect it’s stress.” Emin agreed. He had annual medical check-ups, exercised regularly, ate well and didn’t smoke or drink. Their son, Nicholas, was born followed three years later by a daughter, Alexandra. “Emin continued his annual check-ups because he wanted to be around for his children,” Jennifer says.

In April 2015, Emin set off for his first soccer game of the season at Wavecote Oval, Sydney. Shortly after, Jennifer received a phone call telling her to go to Royal North Shore Hospital urgently. “Emin had just collapsed on the field,” she says. At hospital, someone took the children. “When I was led into a little room, I knew it wasn’t good news.”

Emin had suffered a cardiac arrest. He was 46. Despite his annual check-ups being clear, an autopsy revealed he had fibrous tissue around his heart, which surprised even his cardiologist. “I found myself a widow at 45. It wasn’t what I was expecting any more than having to tell the kids their dad had died playing soccer. Despite being only six, Nicholas understood. When I was led into a little room, I knew it wasn’t good news.”

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