

THE Daily Telegraph

Brother saves 4-year-old from being mauled by a dog

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By Edith Bevin

October 12, 2007 12:00am

HE saved his little brother from being mauled to death but yesterday 11-year-old Jack Payne said he was no hero.

But four-year-old Ben Payne - the victim of the terrifying dog attack in Sydney's west - knows different.

Ben was attacked by a dog in the front yard of his St Marys Park home on Wednesday about 5.45pm.

During the attack the kelpie cross terrier, Romeo, ripped a section of flesh off Ben's head, exposing his skull, bit into his left ear and left bite marks on his face, arms and legs.

Seeing the dog was too vicious and too strong to be pulled off his brother, Jack grabbed a mate's bike and began ramming the dog to drive it away. He then threw the bike at Romeo so that he and Ben, his brother Daniel, 7, and sister Jessica, 8, could make it to the safety of the house.

"Jack stopped that dog from biting me," Ben said.

"I talked to him when I got home from hospital - I said 'thank you'."

But despite being hailed a hero, Jack said he was just doing his job as a big brother.

"I'm the oldest - so it's kind of my job to look after the others," he said.

Jack said he thought Romeo was going to tear his brother apart.

"The dog was growling and biting and going 'grrrr'," Jack said.

"I was afraid - it was scary.

"I thought if I didn't do something Ben would get ripped apart. We couldn't do anything because the dog was just too vicious - we couldn't hold him back so I grabbed my friend's bike and rammed it and then I

threw the bike and went inside.

"That was scary seeing Ben covered in blood."

Ben was rushed to Campbelltown Hospital but because of concerns over the gaping head wound, he was later transferred to The Children's Hospital, Westmead.

He was released from hospital early yesterday morning.

The gutsy four-year-old was yesterday dosed up on painkillers but back outside and playing with his puppy Sandy and dog Molly.

He said the attack was the worse pain he had ever felt. "I was screaming 'get off, get him off me'," he said.

"It hurt a lot. He was biting me and I was screaming.

"It still hurts now . . . a lot."

Romeo belonged to the Paynes' neighbour. The children had played with him and patted him before - the attack was out of character.

Ben's mother Melissa said the attack came without warning.

"You would never have picked that situation in a million years," she said.

"Our kids are used to dogs - we grew up with dogs so they know how to cope with them and it still happened and it was a dog that we knew."

Romeo was surrendered to police by his owner and was put down by council officers yesterday.

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Thanks, mate... Ben Payne, 4, thanks his brother Jack, 11, who saved him from a dog attack yesterday.

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