

A NEW GOAL

Inspirational Dan's looking ahead to a Paralympic future.



Look out for the name Dan Biddle, for he is a man with a mission. For him, Rio, and the Paralympic Games of 2016, is his promised land, though he secretly confesses that London is his dream. Dan is a relative newcomer to archery, but has quickly fallen for the sport in a big way. Becoming a member of the Paralympic squad is his big aim.

At this point, it should be pointed out that Dan's name might even be familiar to some of you, and that his is an inspirational story. Dan was a victim of the London bombings in July 2005. He was a passenger on one of the tube trains that was blown up by a terrorist bomb. Although he was spared his life, he lost both his legs, his left eye and his spleen. He lost 87 pints of blood and still has a scar on his forehead where it took 200 stitches to pull a gash in his head back together. Five years on, he is now married, a proud father, and an ambitious archer. Making the GB squad for 2012 would be nothing short of remarkable, but while he remains a realist, Dan will give it a go. But Rio – that's definitely in his sights!

Sport focus

Before July 2005, Dan was a 6'4" stocky goalkeeper, and during the long days of his rehabilitation, was determined that sport would continue to play a big part in his life. So in October 2008, he decided to take part in a tryout day for aspiring Paralympians, with 70 other competitors. First he tried powerlifting – a shot-putting coach talked approvingly of his phenomenal upper-body strength – then the athletics field events; and finally, almost on a whim, archery. When he picked up the Recurve bow it just felt right. "You only use your right eye if you are right-handed, as you would close the other eye, so it works for me. I was told by the talent spotters that I had something." But after the birth of his daughter, he suddenly, and not surprisingly, had other priorities!

Dan Biddle – being put through his paces during a coaching weekend at Lilleshall with Team GB Paralympic Squad.

"I didn't really get going again until April (2009). I had only been shooting for 10 weeks and entered an open archery competition. It was an immense buzz. I was leading for most of the way, the same buzz I used to get after 90 minutes on the football field, when I'd played well, and made two or three good saves. When I got my medal it was such a buzz." Now, he is training three times a week, and in December joined the GB Paralympic squad at a Lilleshall training weekend.

"It was a fantastic weekend, and everyone made me feel so welcome," said Dan. "They were just lovely people, all of them, and I felt so at home with them."

Remember the face, don't forget the name: The Paralympic Games is Dan's big ambition.

"But apart from being lovely people, they are also fantastic archers and coaches, as you would expect if you are competing and operating at the level they do. I learnt so much from just watching them, asking questions, just being a part of it, and I felt so privileged to be given the opportunity to spend time with them."

"I went home full of it, and determined not just to be a part of it again, but to be a part of it as a squad member, not just a guest. I realise I've got a lot of hard work to do, but I want it, and I will be giving it my all." And Dan's enthusiasm will be fired by the encouraging noises from the coaching team at Lilleshall, who noticed some raw potential.

"He has a lot of potential, he's not bad at all," said Tim Hazell, GB Paralympic coach. "It's very, very hard to become a Paralympian – our squad is as competitive as our Olympic squad – but Dan definitely has all the natural talent, and he is very determined. We are always on the look out for new talent, and we always want to find people with Dan's enthusiasm, and help encourage it. So we'll be keeping a check on his progress, and who knows what the future holds. He's a great guy, and he fitted in really well."

Dan's story is an inspiration. He survived against the odds; went through darkness, but light now shines. For him, life is now an opportunity, and he's

grasping it with both hands. What a wonderful story it would be to see Dan Biddle, a Paralympic archer, and you cannot help but think that destiny is on his side! :

