

Langley sprinter's Olympic dream comes true



Braedon Dolfo will be running at this summer's Paralympic Games in London. The 18-year-old was named to the team on Saturday following the Canadian Olympic and Paralympic track and field trials in Calgary.

Miranda Gathercole/Langley Times

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Braedon Dolfo admits he was on pins and needles.

The 18-year-old — just weeks out of high school after graduating from Langley Secondary in June — was sitting at a Calgary restaurant on Saturday night, waiting to hear if he would be selected to represent Canada at this summer's Paralympic Games in London.

“I had an idea I might make it, but I wasn't fully sure,” Dolfo admitted.

“So I was a little nervous in that sense.”

And then the call came in, telling Dolfo that he would in fact wear the Maple Leaf on the world’s biggest stage.

Dolfo was selected to run for Canada in the 4x100 relay.

“Truthfully, it feels exhilarating,” he said.

Also chosen were Jonathan Dunkerley (Ottawa), Brandon King (Brampton) and Dustin Walsh (Coquitlam). Fort Langley’s Dylan Williamson has also been chosen to attend as he is Walsh’s guide runner.

Visually impaired athletes — Walsh is a T11 and Dolfo a T13 — can use guide runners and that is the role Williamson serves for Walsh.

The runner chooses either an elbow lead, a tether, or to run free while receiving verbal instruction from their guide. Commonly, the blind runner is tethered to their guide with the tether tied loosely around the wrists, or else knotted and held between the fingers in each runner’s hand.

The tether cannot be non-stretch material and the guide runner should not finish before the blind runner.

Dolfo describes his vision as peering through a straw, but unable to see peripherally. It does not prevent him from competing against able-bodied athletes, something he will do in the fall with the Trinity Western Spartans.

“The athletes headed to London have proven through their performances that they are able to compete with the best in the world on a consistent basis,” said Laurier Primeau, Athletics Canada’s Paralympics head coach, in a press release.

Primeau is also the coach of the Spartans track and field team.

Walsh and Dolfo both train together with the Langley Mustangs Track and Field Club.

“We were all just very excited,” Dolfo said.

Walsh and Williamson were seated with Dolfo at the Calgary restaurant when the call came in.

After celebrating with his friends, Dolfo said his first calls were to his family — his dad had watched him race was but was driving back from Calgary — and then some friends, coaches, and his massage therapist.

“A few of the people who have helped me get this far,” Dolfo explained.

“Really, it is not just a one-man effort, it is a team effort and I am just happy to be here.”

Being named to the Canadian team is something Dolfo has dreamt about for a long time. But being named to the team should come as little surprise given his growing international resume.

He has been a member of Canada’s para-national team since 2010 and currently holds the Canadian records in the long jump, high jump, 100m and 200m.

Last year, he won bronze in the high jump at the Paralympic world championships in New Zealand and another bronze in the 100m at the Para-Pan Games in Mexico.

The Paralympic Games run Aug. 29 to Sept. 9.

The plan is to remain in Langley training until leaving for Ottawa next month. The Canadian team will leave for London on Aug. 21.