

The Province

Eyes on the prize: Sprints, jumps let Langley's TWU-bound Dolfo find his wings

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Langley Secondary's Braedon Dolfo shows the bronze medal he won when he set the Canadian record in the high jump at the 2011 Paralympic World Championships in New Zealand. (Photo -- Troy Landreville, The Langley Advance)



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LANGLEY — Braedon Dolfo has never worried about the 95 per cent vision he doesn't have.

Instead, the Langley Secondary senior is using the five per cent he does have, along with a huge heart, to charge head-on towards a potential spot on the Canadian team which will compete in 2012 Paralympic Games later this summer in London.

And after that, despite his visual impairment, Dolfo is set to begin his university career in the fall as a member of the able-bodied track and field team at his hometown Trinity Western University.

"I would describe (my vision) as looking through a straw," says Dolfo, who will test his best against the rest of the Canada West conference next season. "There is no peripheral vision. It's all just dead centre. But my parents never held me back from anything. I started out by trying everything from gymnastics, to soccer, to my first

love which is basketball. But I just decided that track was the easiest because it was just me and the track. It was a sport where I didn't have a ball flying at my face all the time."

Working with Langley Mustangs coach Kim Chapdelaine brought out the best in Dolfo.

He's been training with the Canadian Para-Athletic program since 2009, and is currently the Canadian record holder in his visual impairment category (T13) in the long jump (6.40 metres), high jump (1.83 metres) and 100 metres (11.34 seconds), the latter of which would have ranked him fifth in Canada among able-bodied junior athletes.

"He will be a very strong 4×200 relay runner for us, and I honestly believe that he has a sub-11 second 100-metre run in him this year," said Trinity Western's head coach Laurier Primeau.

Dolfo has experienced huge success on the international stage and he's seen the world in the process.

His Canadian record in the high jump gave him a bronze medal in the 2011 Paralympic World Championships in New Zealand where he also ran the anchor leg of Canada's fourth-place finish in the 4×200 relay. At the 2011 Para-Pan Am Games in Mexico, he won the bronze medal in the 100 metres.

But maybe the biggest thrill yet comes this week, as Dolfo and the rest of the Canadian sprint relay team leave for London to run a test meet at the sparkling new, 80,000-seat Olympic Stadium as games officials conduct a dry run of their timing and call systems, and security procedures.

"I just enjoy the thrill of going into an environment like that," said Dolfo, who has dropped his jumping events for the time being to concentrate on hitting the sprint times he is confident he can achieve to earn his qualification to London. "I thrive on stuff like that. Truthfully, it's not intimidating at all. I have dreamt about having the opportunity to run in a big stadium and I want to live it out."

For his part, Primeau is not only thrilled at the calibre of athlete his program will get in the fall, but the calibre of person.

"He's a huge team guy," said Primeau. "When we got back from the CIS championships, our plane landed in Abbotsford at 9:30 in the morning and the rest of our team was there with signs and banners waiting for us. And Braedon was one of the ones there. Even though he's still in high school, he made a point of being there for us. That's the kind of camaraderie he brings."

And it's not hard to see how much Dolfo loves his sport.

"When I saw where my talent could take me in track, it's just kind of given me wings," Dolfo said. "So far, it's gone well."