

CRAIG WELSH

A JOURNEY OF DISCOVERY THROUGH SPORT

Craig Welsh has been on a road of discovery when it comes to disability sport. His journey started when he was 18 and he went to a Disability Sport Wales run open weekend in Newport. He had a go at many sports over the weekend and the outcome was that he took up powerlifting and 100m wheelchair racing. With his unstoppable determination and desire to perform at the highest level he threw himself into full-time training and within the first year he was selected to head out to Portugal for a warm weather training camp in preparation for the selection trials for the Manchester Commonwealth Games. Just before heading out to Portugal Craig injured his left shoulder during training. To say that he was gutted is an understatement, ***“I was still able to go for the experience and complete light training and rehabilitation. My shoulder never recovered enough for me to compete in these two sports at the level I wanted. With deep regret I had to give up on my dream goals of competing in the commonwealth games and to go on to become a Paralympian”.***



Craig was not prepared to throw away his dream of performing at the highest level and he started to look at other sports. He had always had an interest in cue sports and wondered whether there was a way to turn this interest into performing at a high level. ***“I had a look online and found the BWPPA – British Wheelchair Pool Players Association, an association for disability cue sports. After a few enquiries I joined the tour and competed in competitions across the world”.*** His dream of competing as a Paralympian was re-sparked when he heard that snooker was bidding to be included in the Paris 2024 Paralympics. ***“I stopped playing with the BWPPA and focused all my efforts into snooker, but World Snooker had their bid rejected. Once again, my dreams had been dashed.”***

Where next you may wonder? Craig loves to give back and help wherever he can. It was at a Spinal Games in Stoke Mandeville, where he was a volunteer, that he happened across target shooting and he thought he would give it a go ***“I loved it. This suddenly felt like the sport I had been searching for since powerlifting. I instantly knew this was going to be my entire focus from now on.”***



That was just over two years ago. In that time Craig has had a rapid rise along the shooting pathway. He started under the guidance of the range coach at the Welsh Target Shooting Federation (WTSF) high-performance training range in Cardiff, first shooting with an air rifle rested on a support block and then on a spring rest, which requires more control by the shooter. ***“I started to attend weekly open evenings, this is where I met Paul Scourfield, who clearly saw my determination, and he dedicated months to help my progress, teaching me the basics of shooting.”***

Craig progressed quickly and was soon with Disability Shooting Great Britain (DSGB) and was able to start training with a jacket and sling and his own Rifle, working towards the Paralympic

disciplines, which he was already setting his sights upon. ***“I joined the DSGB monthly camps in Stoke Mandeville. I was soon recruited onto their talent and development program, I trained hard.”***

He was then ready for competition. ***“I entered my first competition, which, unusually compared to most sports, is a competition open to both abled and disabled competitors. The Welsh Open Championships in 2018 and I made 2 finals out of 3 competitions.”***

Craig knew in that moment that with continued hard work and with the right support he could achieve his Paralympic dream. This year he won the British Open R3 Prone Championship, he went to



Hannover, Germany, for his first International competition representing Great Britain and shot a personal best score of 630.6. As at the start of his journey, his unstoppable determination and unwavering desire to perform at the highest levels has been recognised and he has been promoted from the Talent and Development group into the British Shooting National Academy where he is training alongside the World Class Programme Athletes.

“None of this would be possible without the support from Paul Scourfield, John Dallimore MBE and David Phelps, Disability Sport Wales, and especially my coach from the talent & development programme Deanna Coates MBE. All have given me amazing support throughout my Journey.”

Working hard and striving for ultimate precision is becoming a way of life for Craig in his endeavours to chase his goals of going to the Paralympics, ultimately with medals on his mind.

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If you would like to find out more about opportunities in target shooting:

[Welsh Target Shooting Federation](#)

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