



LOG LIVING

Archer aims for gold in Beijing Paralympics

By **ALEX MURPHY**
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“You go from this dark tunnel, and all of a sudden you’re literally blinded by the light,” Lindsey Carmichael said, recalling her experience at the Opening Ceremony of the Paralympics in Athens four years ago. “Around this gigantic stadium 90,000 people are flashing cameras and you hear this immense cheer, and it just shakes you to your bones. It’s the most amazing feeling.”

For Carmichael, now 23, the incredible rush of awe and patriotism has helped motivate her over the last four years of intense training to earn a spot on the 2008 US Paralympics team.

“If you’ve gotten the chance to wear that uniform and walk into the stadium with your teammates, you won’t be the same again,” Carmichael said.

Carmichael competes in the AR3 Recurve archery division, where competitors fire at a target at a 70 meter distance using a Recurve style bow. Watching her practice and speak with fervor and energy about archery and the Paralympics, it’s often easy to forget she suffers from McCune Albright Syndrome, a disease that creates severe weak spots in her bones.

“Do not let what you cannot do interfere with what you can do,” Carmichael said, quoting the famous basketball coach, John Wooden. “A disabled athlete, by their nature, has to adapt and overcome. The quote teaches you if you’re not flexible, if you’re not going to adapt around every obstacle, you might as well stay home.”

Carmichael’s passion for archery began at age 13, when she was still in a wheelchair. A teacher suggested she try it out, and so she and a friend went to a class in Austin. One of the

things that first appealed to her was the nature of the sport. Everyone could compete – men and women, young and old, skinny and heavyset.

“It’s a level playing field, so what it really comes down to is how strong your mental game is,” Carmichael said. “How much you can you focus and how steady you are.”

Her new hobby quickly turned into full-fledged desire, and she soon began competing. In 2002, Carmichael

USA Paralympics coverage

While the paralympics will not be broadcasted on live TV, visit paralympics.teamusa.org for updates on athletes and events.

earned first place in the National Target Championship, and in 2003 she took fourth in the IPC Archery World Championships in Madrid, Spain. That same year, she underwent major surgery requiring her to learn to walk all over again.

Through all her adversity, she’s still retained a sense of optimism—the quiver is half full in her life and sport.

“Obviously, life isn’t perfect,” Carmichael said. “There are downsides to things. You have bad days and bad shots. But the point is to not dwell on them, and to focus exclusively on the positive stuff.”

In Athens, Carmichael set a world record in the ranking round and finished sixth overall. Once she returned to training for the 2008 Paralympics, she found the road in front of her to be quite daunting.

“I had no concept of four years of hard work that nobody else was going to make you do,” Carmichael said. “We have a slogan, it’s not ev-

ery four years, it’s every day, and it’s so true. You wake up some mornings and you’re like, oh God, I don’t want to bother with this. You either go out and shoot or you don’t.”

And shoot she has. Carmichael practices twice a day, in the morning and afternoon. She also swims a few times a week to stay in overall shape. She shoots roughly 120 arrows a day, less than normal due to a recent back injury.

“The qualifying round in Beijing is only going to be 72 arrows, so as long as I’m up a 100 to 150 arrows a day, I’m happy,” She said.

Carmichael departs for Colorado Springs on Aug. 31 for team processing. The Beijing Paralympics begin Sept. 6. She is eager to improve upon her performance in 2004. However, it’s not the competition itself Carmichael is most excited about, but the camaraderie with her fellow paralympic athletes and especially the thrill of the opening ceremony.

“It’s been worth the four years of effort from Athens to here, just so I can have that moment in Beijing,” Carmichael said.

Her parents, Gina and Ron Carmichael, will both be there cheering her on. She will have the opportunity to visit the city of Beijing and other Chinese attractions, only in large groups. Unlike some athletes that get flown home early, she’ll stay for the duration of the games and attend the closing ceremonies.

“It’s a bust for those not able to attend the closing ceremony,” Carmichael said. “It’s almost as good as the opening ceremonies. It gives you closure.”

Overall, Carmichael hopes to simply leave her quiver of arrows in the target.

With her positive attitude and strong commitment, she just might find herself standing on the medals podium.



Above: Lindsay Carmichael practices with fellow archer Lori Dupree outside her home in Lago Vista. Carmichael shoots at least 200 arrows daily, and swims to keep in shape. **Right:** Carmichael wears the official Team USA uniform during the 2004 Summer Olympics in Athens, Greece.



“My goal is to shoot my best shot and to do everything I can do to be the best archer on the field,” She said. “To feel good about my shots and walk off that field knowing I did what I could.”

Editor’s note: this is the final story for Alex Murphy’s summer internship at the LOG. He will attend the Uni-

versity of Texas at Austin and plans to major in radio, film and TV. Murphy wanted to thank all of his interview subjects and everyone that helped in his writing efforts.