

CAN DAN GO FROM CAMP TO RIO?

My name is Daniel Michel and I am a member of the Australian Boccia Team and a Paralympic hopeful for next year's Games in Rio.

I have spinal muscular atrophy, which essentially causes me to have minimal movement and strength throughout my body. Despite being an avid lover of all sports, I never thought there was a sport out there that I could actually play, until I came across Boccia at an MDNSW camp around 5 years ago. Boccia is a strategic sport similar to lawn bowls and is played by athletes with severe physical disabilities, such as myself. It caters to people of all ages and genders, and is competed at a local, state, national and international level - with the pinnacle of the sport being the Paralympic Games. My introduction to the sport came very much by coincidence, as I had no intention to attend the "come

"It has not only provided me with a purpose, but it has also drastically improved my quality of life and given me memories and experiences that will last a lifetime."

training, I could be a state champion; a prophecy I fulfilled this year when I won my maiden state title in March!!!

It has been very much a rollercoaster ride since that first day playing Boccia. After hearing of my potential in the sport I was very motivated to do the best I could and so, I started doing a bit of training after school about once a fortnight. About a year later I competed in my first junior titles, in which I came

3rd. This competition was a very enlightening moment in my Boccia career as I realised that this was a sport that I really could do well in. With a little more training, about a year later I competed in my second junior titles, which I won. Following this, the



Dan Competing for Australia

gained me qualification to the world championships the following year. In 2014, my Boccia career took another giant leap as I competed all around the world. I entered competitions in Canada and Hong Kong, and earned my place in the world championships in Beijing. Despite having a fairly good start to the year, my performance at the world championships was slightly unsatisfactory finishing 36th. Thanks to my better performances in Canada and Hong Kong, my world ranking was promoted to 26 by the end of the year, just 6 places away from guaranteeing myself a spot in the Paralympics. This year I'm competing in Hong Kong, Poland and Korea in a bid to bridge the gap. This journey has not been without challenges, and has required an enormous level of dedication from not only myself, but also my family and sports assistant. However, if you have an interest in sport and, like me, think your disability is too severe to allow you to live a sporting lifestyle, I would strongly encourage you to look into Boccia.

Daniel Michel,
19yrs, Captain of the BC3 Australian Boccia Team



Dan uses a mouthpiece and a ramp to play boccia and has a great partnership with his Sporting Assistant Ash

and try" session that was being run by a few coaches from Boccia NSW. I had assumed, as I had with many other sports, that I would be unable to play it due to my severe physical impairment. However, I decided that I should at least have a look, more out of general interest than anything else. Upon realising that the basic principle of the sport is that it can be played by anyone, regardless of the severity of your disability, I decided I should have a go. After about half an hour of playing, one of the coaches approached me and said that I had a lot of potential and that, if I did some

Australian Paralympic Committee organised a Boccia Paralympic Preparation Program, which was initiated to develop athletes to compete at the Paralympic Games in 2016, 4 years away. I was selected as a junior member of the squad and got the chance to compete in the senior state and national championships. In 2013 I made my international debut when I was selected to compete for Australia at the Asia and Oceania Championships. I finished the competition as the best placed Australian, coming 5th. This earned me a world ranking of 35 and also