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Local archer takes flight

Scott Larson

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Life never flies as straight as an arrow. That's certainly the case with archer Bob Hudson.

The 40-year-old from Leoville leaves this week for Cheong-ju, South Korea to compete in the world championships. It's his last chance to qualify for the 2008 Beijing Paralympics.

Hudson has been shooting competitively for only three years, yet has already experienced the highs and lows of the sport.

After suffering spinal cord injuries in a snowmobile accident in 2003, he vowed to continue living life as normally as possible. Hudson continued to hunt, drive quad, snowmobile, do water sports and woodworking. He had been bow hunting for about 10 years when he introduced to competitive archery in 2005.

Within months Hudson was competing at the national level, finishing second at nationals and 19th at the world championships.

"I hadn't done any competitive shooting before," he says.

At his first competition Hudson took his regular bow and arrows and promptly 'blew them up.' But he was shooting personal bests almost every time out, reaching a score of 1,306 points.

It is never a straight line to the top, though, no matter how good your aim.

A combination of health problems and flawed technique had Hudson moving in the wrong direction.

"In '06 I went into the toilet," Hudson says.

His scored slipped, falling below 1,100 at one point.

With little funding and costs mounting -- about \$20,000 a year to train and compete -- Hudson began wondering if it was worth continuing in the sport.

While his wife, Charlene, and their two children, Shalynne and Tanner, had always encouraged him to pursue his goals, he recognized the sacrifices they were making. He talked about giving up archery.

Soon after his daughter gave him a wooden plaque she had made it school. It read, "Chasing a dream with his family behind him."

"It's still hard for me to talk about that," he says.

To get to the highest level of the sport Hudson knew he needed help.

He hired Ken Chipley of Estevan as his coach and they revamped his technique, losing the bad habits Hudson had acquired over the years.

"We ripped apart everything," Hudson says.

At the last Canada Cup competition Hudson shot a score of 1,321, a personal best.

He figures he'll have to shoot 1,350 to place in the top 16 at worlds in Korea and qualify for the Beijing Paralympics.

"I need to be above my personal best," he says.

"But I've been shooting better and better. If I can qualify next week in Korea I will do well at the Paralympics."

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