

MEDIA RELEASE



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Is This Gympie Teenager Australia's Most Dedicated Athlete?

For most people a 10 kilometre run is a daunting prospect, let alone doing one every evening as part of a fitness regime, but try doing it from a wheelchair.

Well that's exactly what 16 year old MontroseAccess client, Steven Elliott, from Gympie does each night as part of his wheelchair basketball training program. Having already been invited to train at the Australian Institute of Sport last January with the men's under 23 team, the gutsy teenager is now eyeing off a regular starting position in the wheelchair equivalent of the NBL, the National Wheelchair Basketball League (NWBL).

And national competition honours could be just around the corner too. The talented youngster is already a development player for NWBL team, the RSL Spinning Bullets, based in Brisbane. And that's where his dedication is most apparent. Every Thursday night, Steven and his mum Carolyn Frampton drive two and a half hours from Gympie to train in Brisbane with the team, before driving home again for school and work the next day.

Carolyn said: "It was only three years ago that Steven had to start using a wheelchair because of a rare condition called Transverse Myelitis, which means his immune system attacked his spinal cord, and has left him without movement from the waist down. For many people, that would have been a barrier to achieving their goals, but Steven has had such great support from MontroseAccess that he just takes on and overcomes any challenge."

His enthusiasm comes at a cost though. The gruelling training program means his wheelchair tyres only last just over one week before they need replacing. On top of that, his body shape has changed over the last three years, and his sporting wheelchair is no longer suitable.

Carolyn went on to say: "For these guys, the chairs replace their legs and because of that they need to be custom fit to their body. Especially when competing at such a high level of sport. To not have a chair that fits perfectly is not only a disadvantage, but it's also dangerous. In fact Steven recently dislocated his hip in a game following some aggressive game play. Using the right chair would have prevented this."

Steven needs a new chair specifically designed for the sport and his body, but the \$6,000 cost is prohibitive. A local orthopaedic services provider has offered to cover half the cost of a new chair, but even so, the remaining bill on top of existing training expenses is too steep. MontroseAccess is now calling for public support and donations to help Steven achieve his dreams.

"New tyres almost every week, five hours of driving every Thursday night, it all adds up. Steven is so close to achieving his dreams of playing at a national level. His coach has said if his form continues, he'll come off the sidelines this season and get some game time in the NWBL instead of just training with the team. This would mean the world to him and to me and all that stands in the way is the price of a new chair," said Carolyn.

MontroseAccess Occupational Therapist, Tegan King, said: "Steven is an absolute role model for young men, people with a disability and anyone who has a dream. He's such an enthusiastic, honest and caring person who is not afraid to work hard to achieve his goals. If anyone can help Steven to do this, we would love to hear from them."

If you would like to support Steven, please contact MontroseAccess on 3379 9200.

If you would like high res images or to arrange a photo shoot or interview, please feel free to contact MontroseAccess Communications Manager, Adam Harper, on (07) 3717 1184 or 0404 871 360 or email aharper@montroseaccess.org.au

Disability care for kids