

Commonwealth Games New Delhi 2010



On 27 September an eight strong team of New Zealand Archers and Officials departed Auckland airport, destination: the Commonwealth Games in New Delhi. We were one of the first New Zealand teams to arrive in the village.

Arriving at Delhi airport, we had our first taste of the security surrounding the Commonwealth Games and its athletes. We were directed away from the other passengers and were led through the dedicated Commonwealth Games lanes in the airport. We travelled by bus to the village with an armed commando on board, and having the barrel of the rifle being waved around inside the bus took some getting used to. The first thing to strike us about India was the smell. For those in the team who had been to India before it was nothing new, but for those new to India it was a smell that took some getting used to.

We were welcomed into the New Zealand team area with a haka performed by the NZOC officials. We headed to the dining hall, which was an impressive sight, able to seat two and a half thousand people, and we had our first meal at the village. The food was great with a huge variety to choose from.

Very shortly afterwards we headed off to the archery venue. The main focus was to make sure the bows have survived the trip and to get a feel for the venue. Over the next few days, up until the official practice, the team settled into a routine of spending our mornings trying to get onto the internet to contact friends and family back home, and heading to the archery venue around midday to shoot the afternoon session, as this nearly all of the competition for the compounders took place then.

The weather in Delhi was hot, humid and very smoggy, with a light breeze. The team handled these conditions well and the practice sessions went well with all the archers pleased with how they were shooting.

The hottest day was the day of the New Zealand flag raising ceremony, the day before the opening ceremony. The archers were all shooting well and there seemed to be no problems dealing with the heat and humidity with everyone staying well hydrated. An added element was the smog. From early in the morning there was a huge blanket of smog over Delhi, and with there being no wind it remained there the entire day. The smog was that bad that in the mid-afternoon you were able to look directly at the sun without any eye protection. We got dressed in the formal NZOC uniform, and seeing all the archers in their formal wear was quite an impressive sight.

The Sunday 3 October was the official practice day and the day of the Commonwealth Games opening ceremony. It was a change of routine for all the team as the morning was broken into two practice sessions with the last one finishing in the early afternoon. The shooting went well with the archers positioning themselves on the line according to their target allocations in preparation for the next day. With very limited

practice time allowed, the archers made the most of it and came away feeling confident for the upcoming competition.

There were only two members of the team who decided to go to the opening ceremony, as the others felt it was too risky competing tomorrow and not knowing exactly what time they might be back in the village. We watched the opening ceremony on the TV in the athletes lounge on the ground floor of our tower. Half the New Zealand team decided not to participate in the opening ceremony because their competitions started the following day, so there were a large number of the team watching it all in the athletes lounge.

The first day of competition was Monday 4 October. This was the qualifying round. The archers had plenty of time to set up their gear and relax before the shooting started. The practice ends were over quickly and the archers were straight into scoring. There was a bit of a shaky start from a few of the team, maybe a bit of nerves, but they soon settled down and there were some good ends.

At the conclusion of the round, Steve ranked third with 702, Shaun was ranked sixth with 699, Tony ranked fifteenth with 694, Steph ranked twelfth with 679, Mandy ranked nineteenth with 671, and Anne ranked twenty-ninth with a score of 655. All of the archers shot really well, with the men's team ranked third, and the women's team ranked seventh. The conditions for shooting would have been almost perfect had it not been for the heat and humidity. At this point we saw that the Commonwealth Games was not going to be a walk in the park and it was easy to see that all of the Commonwealth Nations who shoot compound have really stepped up to the mark.

The Tuesday was the Individual Elimination matches for both the men and women. The team headed off in two waves, with the women starting shooting at 2pm, and the men at 3.40pm. The men stuck to their usual routine, and the women modified theirs to allow for the earlier start. The men's team got to the archery venue just as the women were finishing their first elimination match, and found that Anne had knocked out the favourite, Nicola Simpson from England. This was to be the biggest upset of the day. Unfortunately, Mandy was beaten by



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Dani Brown from England, but Steph beat Bheigyabati Chanu from India in straight sets and was through to the next round. In the second round, Steph got off to a good start, winning the first set, but Tracey McGowan from Scotland took the next two sets to eliminate Steph. Anne was unable to continue her winning run and was unfortunately beaten by Cassie McCall from Australia in straight sets.

The men's eliminations were next. Steph offered to support the men while they shot, which meant they had a support person behind the line while they were shooting. They all had a bye in the first round. In the second round, Tony tied with Chinna Srither from India and took the one arrow shoot off to win. Steve won in straight sets over Jonathan Snell from Norfolk Island, and Shaun won in straight sets over Abul Mamun from Bangladesh, dropping only one point. In the third round, Tony was beaten by Duncan Busby in straight sets; Steve won the first set against Johannes Grobler from Namibia, but lost the next two and was eliminated. Shaun took Michael Schleppe in straight sets and got through to the semi-final matches. It was a pretty good day, but there were a lot of disappointed archers as well, so some very mixed emotions in the team. Credit to the team members, they were very supportive of one another.

Team's elimination matches were on the Wednesday for both the men and women. The women's match was against the English team, who were ranked first. The team got off to a great start with a 58: 2 points up on England, but over the next three ends the English team drew even and then snuck ahead a few points each of the last two ends to win 227 against 221. Our team put up a good fight but were beaten on the day. In the overall standings they finished sixth in the Commonwealth.

The men arrived shortly after the women had finished, all in a flap: "Have you heard, Shaun's been attacked by a monkey!" Apparently, on the way to the food hall at lunch time, the men came across one of the security monkeys that were used in the village. The monkeys were transported by their handlers on the back of bicycles, and this particular monkey had attracted a bit of a crowd and as Shaun went passed it lashed out and gave him a bit of a scratch on the arm.

The men's first match was against Cyprus, which they easily won 230 against 221. The scores in the first round by some of the teams were world class, with many of the top teams scoring in the 230's. This was not going to be easy. The next match was against India. The Indian crowd went nuts during the match. The Indian team were thriving on the cheers and yells. The men struggled to find the same form that they had in the last match and the Indians took it 226 to 225. The whole team was gutted that they lost by a point. It was honestly a relief to get back to the apartment and relax after a day of such pressure.

On the Thursday it was the team semi-final and final matches. We had hoped to be shooting today, but it just wasn't to be. Shaun surfaced mid-morning, as he had been up all night with a crook stomach. Shaun had planned to go for a practice today, but because of his condition it was no longer an option. We spent a quiet day in the village instead.

On Friday things were better health-wise. Shaun and I got to the archery venue in the afternoon, just in time for a practice. Shaun was shooting really well and did not show any ill effects from the previous day and things were looking good for the semi-finals. The last twenty arrows he shot in practice were all in the 10, with the last three ends being 3X 60's.

On Saturday the semi-finals and finals were upon us. With only Shaun left in the competition there was a fair amount of pressure on him, yet he did a great job of not showing it. Shaun got in about three quarters of an hour's practice in before the start of his first match. The other seven compound men's finalists were on the practice field as well, getting warmed up.

Shaun's first match was against Grobler from Namibia.



Grobler had not been to any of the World Cups, so nobody had really seen him shoot before apart from at the Commonwealth Games. In saying that, he shot extremely well to get into the last eight, beating Steve Clifton in his last match to get there. The first match got underway and Shaun took control right from the outset taking the first set. He kept this up over the second and third sets winning both pretty easily. The results from the matches have some of the World Cup regulars, Chris White and Duncan Busby from England, and Seppie Cilliers from South Africa and our own Shaun Teasdale out on top.

Shaun met Duncan Busby in the first match. Duncan shot really well right from the start and took the first two sets. Shaun shot a perfect 30 and took the third, and we were all thinking, "yes, he is going to come from behind and take it!" But it was not to be, as Busby took the final set to win, six points to two. Shaun was still in the hunt for the Bronze medal, and had enough time for a couple of quick practice ends before the Bronze medal match. Chris White beat Seppie Cilliers, so it was Busby and White going for Gold, and Shaun and Cilliers shooting for the Bronze.

Steve was behind the line with Shaun, and I was down the other end doing the scoring. The first end of the Bronze medal match was a tie, and so was the second. This was nail-biting stuff. The third set Cilliers took by one point to go two points up. The fourth end again was a tie, making it 5 against 3 to Seppie Cilliers. Shaun needed to win the next set to stay in the running. Unfortunately Shaun shot a 28 and Seppie a 29 to take the Bronze medal. Shaun was absolutely gutted.

In less than five minutes after the conclusion of the match, Shaun was giving his interview to the media. He did well, showing maturity beyond his years for an athlete who has spent the past four years working towards a Commonwealth Games medal, only to miss it by the smallest of margins. After that Shaun headed off for drug testing. After some difficulty with the measurements he passed, and with a sigh of relief we headed back to the village. The Commonwealth Games was over for the archers, and they were now allowed to relax and be spectators.

It was an experience, and I think all the team members have learned a lot. If we as a sport were to be in this position again in four years time, I am confident that we would be much better prepared for all the different scenarios an event like the Commonwealth Games can throw at a team. The experience and information gained will be passed on and will benefit archers competing at multi-sport events in the future.

Shane Switzer
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