

D'arce Hess, one of the world's best archers, trained by local coach

BY [BRIAN HAMILTON](#)
SPORTS EDITOR,

Charley Washburn is either a great coach or one heck of a recruiter. And if he ever needs first-person testimony to speak on the quality of his coaching, he should look no further than to D'arce Hess.

Hess, a member of the local Nevada County Gold Archery Team has qualified to join the USA Paralympic Team to compete in the Czech Republic Aug. 15-24.

And the 26-year-old Hess points to Washburn as one of the major forces behind her success. In fact, she moved here two and a half years ago to pick his brain about the sport. Upon meeting Washburn at a competition in Las Vegas, Hess was intrigued by both his knowledge and love for the sport.

"I met Charley four years ago," Hess said. "And all he talked about was his students and kids on the team. He was so proud of them. I was really impressed with that."

After moving from Vegas to Southern California to train with another coach, she once again bumped into Washburn at the same competition.

"I caught up with Charley again and pretty soon I was flying up here to train on the weekends," she said. "But flying was getting old, so I grabbed my poor fiancé and moved up here."

Two other area archers who have trained with Washburn at the Nevada County Sportsmen's Club, Becky Nelson-Harris and Mark Applegate, recently returned from competing at the World Games in Taiwan. Several other members of Washburn's youth program have succeeded at the state and national level, including Penn Valley's Trelaina Borges, a member of the USA Archery Junior Team.

Washburn, a level 4 NAA (National Archery Association), High Performance Archery coach said Hess is well prepared for trip around the world. She recently took a bronze medal finish in the IPC (International Paralympic Committee) sponsored European Grand Prix in Stoke Mandeville, England in June. She also has spent two weeks training with the USA team at the USA Olympic Training Center in Chula Vista.

This event is one of several major international Para-Archery events for the USA Paralympic archery team, with the two most prestigious being the Paralympics held every four years to coincide with the Olympic Games and the other the Para-Archery World Games on the odd years in between.

"I'm terrified," she said with a laugh. "Actually, I'm very excited ... I plan on coming home with a medal around my neck. That's my goal. And it's only going to happen if I shoot the way I can shoot."

She is currently the No. 1 ranked women's Paralympic Standing Olympic recurve archer in both the state of California and the USA. She is also ranked third in the world.

Hess, who has succeeded despite struggling with scoliosis, fused vertebrae and "a very, very bad knee," also has her sights set to compete as a member of the 2012 Paralympic Archery Team. But she's not limiting herself to paralympic competition.

"My goal is to make the Olympics and the Paralympics," she said.

Hess began her archery career 15 years ago as an 11-year-old in Las Vegas, after joining some friends who shot long bow in Renaissance Faire events. She continued to shoot long bow for 12 years, when she moved to the Olympic recurve competition.

Hess, who resides in Nevada City, has also become a Level 1 Archery Instructor and enjoys teaching archery to local 4H groups, in addition to assisting with hunter's education classes.

"The archers in our club are unbelievable," she said. "It's unlike any group I've ever seen. Everybody knows everybody and we just have a really great support system.

"And also, I've shot at a lot of ranges — and even though it might be tough to maintain sometimes — (the NC Sportsmen's Club) is one of the best in the country to train at."

To contact Sports Editor Brian Hamilton, e-mail bhamilton@theunion.com or call 477-4240.

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