

## PARA EQUESTRIAN

### Anthony Dawson

Campaign for the 2012 London Olympic Games



Anthony and Ardmores Ceramics' Remus B  
at the KwaZulu Natal  
Para Dressage Championships 2011  
Photo credit: H<sup>2</sup> Photography

Like all Para Equestrians Anthony Dawson's story should be a sad one, instead it is a story of triumph over adversity, of guts and determination, and proof that big dreams can be turned into reality.

Before he was six months old, Anthony was diagnosed with Cerebral Palsy. His specific brain damage makes him a Spastic Right Hemi-plegic. Doctors were very reserved in their prognosis, insisting that he would neither talk nor be able to attend a main stream school and that the chances of him walking were slim.

A lifetime of therapies started; occupational, speech and physiotherapy, interspersed with Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy. Before he was two and before he could walk Anthony's mother heard of Hippotherapy - using horses to improve the quality of life for people with disability.

Horses have been the single most profound influencing part of Anthony's life physically, intellectually, emotionally and spiritually. Paediatric Neurologist Professor Andre Venter has stated that without Anthony's riding he would not have achieved all that he has.

Physically he surpassed the doctors' expectations and he both attended main stream schools, as well as always achieving outstanding academic results.

After Philippa Johnson won her first gold medal at the Beijing Paralympic Games in 2008, Anthony was inspired to follow in her path. No longer was his riding simply for leisure or therapeutic reasons. That same year he competed for the first time as a Para-Equestrian and has not looked back.

In 2009 he was the Western Province Para Dressage champion, the Champion of his home province KwaZulu Natal and also the South African champion. Last year he was the youngest rider in Team South Africa at the World Equestrian Games. Owing to Team South Africa commitments he never had the opportunity to defend any titles last year, but is again KwaZulu Natal Champion as well as Reserve Champion in 2011.

Anthony has recently been given the ride of Ardmores Ceramics' stallion Remus B. Together they make a stunning combination at local shows and people watching a para rider on a powerful, black stallion are often moved to tears. Clive Milkins (GBR), Anthony's European Coach and Paralympic coach for Sophie Christiansen (Current European, World and Paralympic Gold Medallist) was in South Africa recently to coach Anthony. Whilst observing Anthony riding Remus B, he turned to Fee Berning and said, "Give me this horse and this rider and I will give you gold!"

A few years ago Anthony had a big dream. Today he is living his dream by meeting his goals. His next step is to compete at Hartpury's Festival of International Dressage (FEI CPEDI3\*), Great Britain. In 2010 he competed at Hartpury CPEDI3\* and was ranked 7<sup>th</sup> overall. He was also awarded the trophy for "Highest Scoring Foreign Rider on a Borrowed Horse", as well as achieving two qualifying scores for the London 2012 Paralympic Games. This year he hopes to achieve a top five position at Hartpury CPEDI3\*, which will help him achieve his goal of moving from being ranked 126<sup>th</sup> in the world in 2010, to the top 100 in 2011.



Anthony at the  
Nissan Easter Festival 2011  
Photo credit: H<sup>2</sup> Photography

Passion is perhaps the single most important force that drives Anthony. He is passionate about his riding and what he wants to achieve with his riding. This kind of passion cannot be stifled rather it is the kind of energy that will ensure that Anthony keeps on a consistently positive path.