



GB water polo player Kathryn Fowler prepares for training at Wyndley Baths. (Picture by Steve Harlow)

# Teenager jumps in at the deep end to follow Olympic dream

**S**EVENTEEN-year-old Kathryn Fowler's dream is to compete in the Olympics. The Sutton water polo player is already training with the senior Great Britain squad and knows the level of dedication and commitment needed to achieve her goal.

Alongside studying for A-Levels at Sutton Coldfield Grammar School for Girls, Kathryn puts in 20 hours a week training to ensure she stays on top of her game.

She joined Boldmere Swimming Club at the age of 10 and progressed to become the current Warwickshire county champion in the 200m backstroke and the 200m individual medley.

But it was seeing an action-packed polo training session that first sparked her interest in the game.

"I saw Boldmere's water polo team training while I was swimming, so gave it a go," she said.

"My grandad played water polo, so I did have some understanding of what it involved before I started playing.

"He's told me many stories of him and his brother playing water polo in India during the war, when they played in their local leagues."

To reach the top in any sport is a dream of many talented young people. Here, Hannah George discovers why Sutton teenager Kathryn Fowler may just be on track to achieving that goal



And for Kathryn the sport has become her passion.

She speaks modestly about her achievements, but behind her unassuming nature is a quiet determination to succeed.

She now plays for Liverpool Water Polo Club, who are at the top of division one in the national league.

From December 17 to 20 she will travel with the club to Athens to compete in the European Champions Cup.

"I want to go all the way," she says.

"I want to go to the Olympics."

And there is every chance that dream could become a reality.

Kathryn is part of the Government's Talented Athlete Scholarship Scheme and was voted most promising junior player in the women's national league for the 2007/08 season.

She is now training in the GB adult squad

in preparation for a possible appearance in London in 2012.

Her gruelling training schedule proves just how seriously Kathryn takes her ambitions:

Every Monday, after a full day at school, she will train for an hour in the gym, followed by two hours of swimming.

Tuesday's session involves three hours in the gym, usually followed by a polo match.

Wednesday she has a weights session in the gym.

Thursday she swims before school and again in the evening at Castle Vale baths, and Friday night is dedicated to playing polo.

To meet her GB commitments, Kathryn also travels to Manchester every other Wednesday for intensive training with the squad, returning home on Thursday evening.

"Training with the GB squad is hard work and it was daunting to start with, but I love it," she says.

"I hate sitting around doing nothing. I have always been a swimmer but it is a very individual sport – whereas playing polo you meet lots of people.

"As a team you have everyone else, there is pressure but it is a different atmosphere. I like the team aspect of it."

And while Kathryn focuses her energy into her sport, the grade A student never lets her marks slip.

She achieved 10 A\*s at GCSE and is on course for a haul of A grades at A-Level.

"I manage school work around training," she says.

"I have always done it, so I am used to being organised.

"My school is really good, they know what I do and they support me."

Kathryn also paid tribute to her family for their unfailing support.

"My parents have always been there for me," she said.

"They are the main reason why I have been able to reach for my potential.

"They have supported me through everything, and have helped me make the most of the opportunities I have been given.

"I wouldn't be half the person I am without their support."

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