



Matthew Dean

I suffer from Usher syndrome type III. I started losing my hearing first at around 14 and my sight at 17. By the time I was 21 my hearing was a moderate to severe loss and I had around 10% useful vision. I always enjoyed sports, football being my preferred sport. I had to move away from playing mainstream competitively as I could no longer compete with fully able sportspersons. As my communication with hearing aids wasn't too bad I opted for visually impaired sports as my vision affects me more, especially when playing sports. I started with football and athletics but having hardly any peripheral vision found football frustrating, especially when I knew I was a far better player when I wasn't visually impaired. I quickly got disillusioned, tried athletics as I knew I could compete on a more level playing field but I love team sports and found it hard competing in individual sports. I stopped playing all sports at around 19 years of age.



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My father suggested I try visually impaired cricket, which at the time I didn't know anything about nor had I played cricket as a fully sighted person, I was apprehensive at the time but gave it a go. It became apparent that I had a natural ability within cricket and it wasn't long before I got a call up for trials with the national team. I found that the combination of different sight levels refreshing as you had to work together with totally blind people through to partially sighted at the higher end. It was the teamwork and seeing people play the same game but in completely different ways that excited me. Having a hearing loss as well as a visual loss meant I had to work harder, but because we had to adapt our teamwork anyway to suit different sight levels creating signals or ways to get the best out of my ability, it was never an issue.

I have gone on to captain my country in many international series and a world cup. I have received accolades and nominations from my countries cricketing governing body and from other organisations such as Pride of Sport Awards. I have truly been lucky and to think I thought I would never play sports again turning 20 years old.



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Having a dual disability and playing sports isn't easy, I won't lie, but there are many of us. I have met several from around the world playing blind cricket and if you look into the Para Olympics there are even more from swimmers to skiers. It's all about finding what suits you, I have even started playing football again realising that it's not always about winning or being the best, but because I love the game.