

A Conversation with Cadet Sergeant Mark Arendz



C/S Mark Arendz

At the age of seven, Mark Arendz lost his left arm in a farming accident. Now 17, this Army cadet from PEI is making a mark on the world as an international champion biathlete. Cadet Sergeant Arendz has also achieved direct entry Gold with the Duke of Edinburgh program and is a Safety Ambassador for War Amps. He was recently named Junior Athlete of the Year by Sports PEI and recipient of a \$10,000-grant from the MacDonald Restaurant chain, to help relieve some of his travelling and training expenses.

In June 2008, Mark will age out as a cadet. Bill Minnis, President of the Army Cadet League of Canada's PEI Branch had a chance to talk to him earlier this month. Here's what Mark had to say about his Army cadet experience.

Bill Minnis (BM): How long have you been a cadet? What has your experience been like?

I have been an Army Cadet with the RCACC 107 New Haven Corps for three and a half years. It has been a memorable experience including some terrific expeditions and some tough drill nights. It was great to have opportunities, through the cadets program, to give back to the community by participating in food drives, or cleaning summer camps.

BM: Why did you choose to be an Army Cadet rather than Sea or Air?

I chose to join the Army cadets because I knew a few friends that were Army Cadets. My brother had just recently joined at the New Haven corps so it made sense to join Army Cadets.

BM: Now that you're aging out, what kinds of life lessons has the Army Cadet program given you?

The Army Cadets have given me so much. I have learned vital skills like respect, order, citizenship and discipline, and other skills like orienteering, building rescue shelters, marksmanship and fitness. Cadets focuses on giving back which I think is an important part of everyone's life.

BM: How did your career as a biathlon athlete begin?

It began after my younger brother joined RCACC 107 and I started practicing in biathlon program. The coach asked me if I wanted to try shooting. I have been hooked ever since. A couple of weeks later, I made the corps' biathlon team.

BM: Can you explain how you had to adapt your technique as a biathlete to accommodate your disability?

There are no adaptations while skiing. I ski with only my right pole. Shooting is where my adaptations are. I wear an arm with an elbow which I can lock, which is similar to wearing a sling. On the end of my arm there is a fork so that I may rest the rifle in it.

BM: What has been your greatest challenge as an athlete?

To find enough time to train, travel and compete and do everything else.



Cadet Arendz with Bill Minnis at his last Annual Cadet Parade at RCACC 107.