Disability is not holding him back

Talha Randeree

For the few people who have met Ashish Ramsurrup, they will know he embodies the true meaning of ‘one in a million’.

This young man has taken gigantic steps forward in life, and is currently employed as a chemical engineer for ArcelorMittal.

He is also an avid cricketer and sportsman, and has held a record for South Africa in shot-put.

Born with an unformed left hand due to the rare Phocomelia Syndrome, Mr Ramsurrup was often underestimated by classmates, colleagues and even teachers while growing up.

“I was never teased growing up, but people did think differently about me, so I decided to work hard to prove them wrong.

“I worked hard to turn my weaknesses into my strengths,” explained Mr Ramsurrup.

Being referred to as ‘the champion son’ by his late grandmother, Mr Ramsurrup strove to meet the expectations of his parents and family. In his words, they never saw him as having a disability.

Growing up in Durban afforded Mr Ramsurrup the opportunity not only to test himself physically against able-bodied persons, but also against other disabled persons.

Later in life, he was participated in both provincial and national Paralympic meets.

He was scheduled to represent the South African Paralympic team in shot-put and discus during the Beijing Olympics, and more recently the London Olympics, but was forced to withdraw due to unforeseen circumstances.

“I’ve never really felt like I have a disability, maybe because I’m so used to it, but when I did feel down and out, I used my past achievements as motivation to further my growth.”

One of the highlights in his life, and an achievement that constantly motivates him, was receiving the Headmasters Award at Northwood High School in Durban. This prestigious award is given to the pupil who shows the most potential, a constant reminder to Mr Ramsurrup of what he can achieve.

He explained that coming from a competitive family, he had to constantly push himself, because his younger brothers were always challenging him. In their own way, the brothers motivated each other to succeed.

Mr Ramsurrup is currently on a strict training regimen to captain the South African disabled cricket side next month, but also wants to prepare for the 100- and 200-metre sprints for the national Paralympic team.

“I want to represent South Africa internationally! I always advise people to find a goal and keep at it. Try to reach the pinnacle, be the best you can be. It’s very easy to quit, but the rewards for not quitting are so much