

Daniel aims to scoop the pool

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Visually-impaired swimmer Daniel Holt has scooped a host of medals and smashed Paralympic records less than a year-and-a-half after his first competitive race.

Now the Long Bay College student has designs on the London 2012 Paralympics.

Born with 6/60 vision, Daniel, 15, says he needs to be at six feet (1.8 metres) to see the same detail most people can see from 60 feet (18 metres).

And while that greatly hinders his participation in most sports, the North Shore club member says swimming "isn't overly affected".

"I can just watch the black line on the bottom of the pool," he says.

"And if I'm doing backstroke I just count my strokes."

In July Daniel travels to Colorado in the United States, accepting an invitation from Blind Sport New Zealand to attend the State Games of the West where up to 15,000 competitors are expected.

But unlike most of the swimmers he'll be up against, and most swimmers in general, Daniel hasn't chosen to specialise at a certain distance or even in a certain stroke.

"I'll probably enter the 50, 100 and 200-metre freestyle, the 50 and 100-metre butterfly, the 50 and 100-metre backstroke and the 200-metre individual medley," says the Albany resident.

"But I'm not sure yet."

While Daniel reckons his strongest events are "probably the 100 or 50-metre freestyle" he holds two NZ Paralympic backstroke records.

He has also beaten four other NZ Paralympic record times, but because they were recorded with manual stopwatches and not an electronic touch-pad system, they have not been officially recognised.

In Colorado however, he'll get the chance to set some records straight.

"I'm definitely looking to set some new personal bests there," says the Long Bay College year 11 student.

"Then after my exams I'm looking at upping my training.

"Then it's more records and qualifying for the Olympics."

"He's so focussed and determined, he's an example to anyone," says Long Bay College's Julie Haskell.

"He just says: 'That's my goal, and I'm going to do it.'"