

How a Future World Champion Was Stopped

This document accompanies *The Making and Breaking of a Future World Champion*. It explains, in summary form, the principal findings, legal decisions, evidential concerns and practical consequences that interrupted Max Baxter's education, separated him from his support network and brought an exceptional sporting journey to an abrupt halt.

An Extraordinary Sporting Journey Interrupted

During and after the Family Court proceedings, Max experienced a series of events that no young athlete should ever have to endure. They interrupted the education he had fought to obtain, separated him from his support network and repeatedly prevented him from pursuing the sporting opportunities that had already established him as one of the most exceptional young shooting talents in the United Kingdom.

- Police and court enforcement officers became involved in his life, including the confiscation of his passport and the service of legal documents.
- His father was blamed for Max refusing to remain with his mother and was subsequently found in contempt of court after Max himself ran away and returned to him.
- During one of the court appearances, arising from Max's refusal to have contact with his mother, he was held for approximately five hours in an underground room at the Royal Courts of Justice.
- While living with his mother during the High Court proceedings, Max lived under enforcement supervision, including an enforcement officer positioned outside his bedroom.
- From 26 February 2026, as Court of Appeal applications proceeded, Max was effectively placed into isolation in the Cotswolds under the supervision of an enforcement officer to prevent him from returning to his father in London.
- For the first six weeks, Max was permitted only 10 minutes of supervised contact with his father. That contact ended completely on 12 April 2026.
- All of Max's electronic devices were confiscated, cutting him off not only from his father but also from his friends and wider support network.
- From 26 February 2026, Max was no longer able to attend even the interim placement at Marylebone Boys' School directed by the court, let alone the boarding school education he had consistently requested.
- His father has not seen Max since 26 February 2026 and has not spoken to him since 12 April 2026.
- Max missed major competitions, including the English Open, England Team Trial, British Open and World Championship opportunities, at a time when his established performances indicated that he was a genuine contender for podium finishes and victories.
- Max lost regular access to the elite coaching and development environment that had transformed his shooting. This included continued coaching from David Dale,

ongoing mentoring from George Digweed, regular access to the National Clay Shooting Centre and EJ Churchill, together with the opportunity to train and compete alongside many of the United Kingdom's leading shooters.

- Max's rapid development had also begun attracting commercial recognition. Despite being only fourteen years old, he had already secured sponsorship within the United Kingdom, with further sponsorship opportunities expected to follow as his performances continued to develop. Those opportunities did not realistically exist in South Africa, where the sport has a much smaller competitive and commercial base. As George Digweed explained in his affidavit, the opportunities available to Max in England simply did not exist in South Africa.

For many months, Max consistently maintained that he would not return to South Africa. Yet, within six days of reaffirming that position to his own legal team on 30 April 2026, it was asserted that he had agreed to return, an abrupt reversal that remains a matter of grave concern.

The Disputed Findings

The English decision rested substantially upon findings that Max's wishes were not truly his own because of alleged enmeshment with his father, and that his deteriorating relationship with his mother resulted from parental alienation.

Those findings remain strongly disputed.

The finding of enmeshment is disputed because one of the first questions psychologists ordinarily consider is whether there was any realistic opportunity for enmeshment to develop. Max had lived with his mother in South Africa for approximately seven to eight years, while his father lived over 6,000 miles away in London. Contact was limited to periodic school holiday visits and daily telephone calls that took place in the presence of his mother. Following subsequent review of the available material, multiple psychologists have expressed the view that those circumstances are fundamentally inconsistent with the opportunity ordinarily associated with enmeshment.

The finding of parental alienation is also disputed. In England, parental alienation is not established simply because a child rejects one parent. The central question is whether the child's expressed views have an objectively identifiable foundation. Throughout these proceedings, Max consistently linked his wishes to his education, his boarding school place, his sporting ambitions, the country he still regarded as home, and events that he himself had experienced. Whether those matters adequately explained his views remains central to the ongoing evidential debate.

The Psychological Evidence

The disputed findings of enmeshment, parental alienation and psychological splitting formed part of a psychologist's report prepared in South Africa. Those conclusions are challenged because they were accepted without apparent reference to the documented chronology or the

substantial body of contemporaneous objective evidence available at the time. The report did not address the inconsistencies between those allegations and the established timeline.

The report also failed to engage with material evidence concerning Max's exceptional sporting development. By late 2024, expert evidence was already available addressing Max's accessibility to elite coaching and competition in England, his demonstrated aptitude, and the central importance of clay shooting to his identity, education and future development. That evidence was neither analysed nor weighed within the report, despite its direct relevance to Max's circumstances, his sporting investment and the allegations of parental alienation considered throughout these proceedings.

The report was subsequently challenged by another psychologist and its conclusions were further contradicted by seven sworn affidavits from individuals with direct knowledge of the relevant events.

The South African Ex Parte Order

Immediately after Max returned to South Africa, an ex parte order suspended every form of contact between Max and his father for at least three months, placed any future contact under professional control, authorised the removal of his electronic devices, required psychotherapy addressing alleged enmeshment, parental alienation, possible psychosis and psychological splitting, and directed him into an intensive reunification programme with his mother.

The practical consequence was immediate and complete. I have not seen Max since 24 February 2026 and have not spoken to him since 12 April 2026.

The Evidential Basis of the Ex Parte Order

Subsequent evidential analysis has raised significant concerns regarding the evidential foundation upon which that ex parte order was obtained.

It is alleged that, after the psychologist's report was challenged, additional witness statements were obtained in support of its conclusions. Among those relied upon by the court were statements from two of the father's carers. The father is a quadriplegic and wheelchair user.

When those statements were later examined during the Metropolitan Police evidential review supporting the current criminal investigation, 43 of the 48 factual allegations contained within them were identified as objectively demonstrable as false by reference to contemporaneous documentary evidence. The evidential review concluded that numerous allegations were capable of being shown to be blatant misrepresentations. Those statements now form part of the evidential referral supporting the ongoing criminal investigation

Two further witness statements, including a further carer's statement relied upon during the South African proceedings in June 2025, have also become the subject of criminal investigation. Numerous aspects of those statements are likewise alleged to be objectively

demonstrable as false when compared with contemporaneous evidence, raising further concerns regarding the reliability of witness evidence relied upon during those proceedings.

It is further alleged that the South African ex parte order was obtained by reliance upon evidence which the applicant knew to be materially untrue when it was presented to the Court. Because the application proceeded without notice, the applicant was under the well-established duty of full and frank disclosure, requiring all material facts to be presented fairly, accurately and without omission. It is alleged that this duty was breached through reliance upon evidence known to be false, depriving the Court of the opportunity to determine the application on a complete and accurate factual foundation. Those matters go directly to the integrity of the ex parte proceedings and to the evidential basis upon which the order was granted.

Why This Matters

These events did far more than create legal proceedings. They removed Max from the education, coaching, competition and family support that had enabled his extraordinary development. They interrupted his progress at precisely the moment he had become the United Kingdom's highest-ranked Junior English Skeet shooter and was beginning to establish himself as one of the most promising young clay target shooters of his generation.

The consequences extended far beyond missed competitions. They interrupted access to world-class coaching, elite training facilities, established sponsorship, emerging commercial opportunities and the unique sporting environment that had allowed his exceptional ability to flourish.

The concerns did not arise only because of the outcome of the Family Court proceedings. Throughout those proceedings, repeated attempts were made to draw attention to significant factual inaccuracies and evidential concerns. Following Max's return to South Africa, detailed examination of the existing evidential record by independent evidential and forensic specialists identified further matters requiring investigation. Those matters ultimately resulted in the evidential referral that led to the Metropolitan Police criminal investigation described below.

The central question is therefore not simply what happened in court, but what is now required to protect Max's welfare, education and extraordinary future.

The Criminal Investigation

The Family Court proceedings did not mark the end of this story.

Following extensive independent review of the evidence, a complaint was made to the Metropolitan Police Service concerning the evidential handling of significant aspects of the case. That complaint resulted in the commencement of a criminal investigation.

The investigation has involved detailed examination of the existing evidential record, forensic analysis of documentary material and specialist forensic psychological assessment. During that process, the evidential review identified more than one hundred material factual inaccuracies together with more than thirty significant evidential issues requiring detailed examination. Those findings resulted in an evidential referral supporting allegations of perverting the course of justice and the commencement of a criminal investigation.

The purpose of that investigation is not to revisit the Family Court's welfare decision. It is to determine whether evidence relied upon during those proceedings was accurate and whether any criminal offences may have been committed.

The evidential referral includes allegations concerning the preparation and use of psychological evidence, the reliability of multiple witness statements relied upon in both the English and South African proceedings, and whether evidence alleged to have been materially false was knowingly presented to the courts. Those matters are now being examined independently of the Family Court's welfare determinations.

The investigation now rests with Metropolitan Police forensic specialists pending referral, where appropriate, to the appropriate criminal justice authorities.

The Wider Importance

Max's case raises issues extending well beyond one family.

An application seeking permission to appeal to the Supreme Court is currently being progressed. Among the issues proposed to be raised are the weight that should be given to the clearly expressed wishes of an older child in Hague Convention proceedings, the extent to which the welfare consequences of those proceedings should influence the outcome, and the proper evaluation of psychological and other evidence upon which decisions of such significance are based.

Whatever the outcome of that application, the issues raised extend far beyond Max himself. They concern how the law should respond when an older child's clearly and consistently expressed wishes, welfare, and the future they have worked so hard to build appear to conflict with the objectives of the Hague Convention.

For that reason, Max's case is not simply about one family. It raises wider questions about how the voices of older children should be heard, how expert evidence should be evaluated and how exceptional educational and sporting opportunities should be weighed when courts are asked to determine a young person's future.

Why Your Support Matters

A Personal Reflection from Max's Father

The following personal reflections explain why this campaign began and why it continues.

There was a time when I was fighting what seemed a losing battle. As a litigant in person, I stood alone in complicated Hague Convention civil proceedings against one of England's leading legal teams and King's Counsel barristers, struggling simply to have my evidence properly heard.

But truth has a way of finding its own witnesses.

Now, Metropolitan Police evidential experts are applying their singular focus to the analysis of that evidence. The question is no longer whether the evidence will be heard, but what it has already revealed.

What began as a battle in which I appeared destined to lose, with critical evidence receiving inadequate consideration during the civil proceedings, has been transformed by one simple objective: to ensure that the full evidential record is placed before the appropriate criminal authorities and, if charges follow, before a criminal court.

Those responsible for any proven wrongdoing will then be required to answer to the evidence. In criminal proceedings, evidence speaks for itself, and the outcome belongs not to the loudest advocate, but to the facts.

But those investigations, important though they are, cannot give Max back the time he has already lost.

What Your Support Can Do

Having read both documents, you now understand not only the future Max had begun to build, but also the findings, decisions and restrictions that brought that journey to an abrupt halt.

Your support cannot restore the time already lost, and it is not intended to influence the outcome of any legal proceedings or investigation. It can, however, help ensure that Max's welfare, his clearly expressed wishes, his education and his sporting future are not forgotten while those processes continue.

If you believe that Max deserves the opportunity to reclaim the future he worked so hard to build, please add your name to the growing list of people who support him.

You are also invited to write a personal message to Max.

He almost certainly will not be permitted to read those messages now, but every message will be kept for him. One day, when he is able to read them, they will show him that people heard his story, stood beside him and believed that his future was worth protecting.

Please send your name and your message for Max to:

support@max-baxter.com