

## YOUR FIRST OUTDOOR TOURNAMENT

### BEFORE

You will need to know:

- where the shoot is being held and how to get there, and the journey time
- the start time, and the length of the shoot
- (not always required) your Handicap – if you have shot at least 3 rounds at the club, the Club Records Officer – and most members – can calculate your current handicap rating for you

You should have been sent (or given, if someone else entered you) a Target List, telling you which position you will be in on the shooting line.

### What to take with you

- Your bow, arrows, and all the accessories and bits of equipment you usually use to shoot – Make sure you do a thorough check, and put all the gear together in one place so you can be sure you take everything with you when you leave.
- A score book if you have one, to record all your hits and misses
- Your GNAS Membership Card
- Wet weather clothing
- Sun cream or sun-shielding hat or clothing
- Something to sit on while waiting between ends
- A tent / shelter / fishing umbrella if you have such a thing – with guyropes
- A packed lunch and / or any refreshments you will need to get you through the day. Some tournaments have a refreshment stall, or even a proper clubhouse and servery on site – check the entry form to see what will be available.
- Some shoots are held on fields which don't have wonderful WC and washing arrangements, so it's a good idea to take some 'wet wipes' or anti-bacterial hand wash gel, some tissues, and maybe even toilet paper.
- Camera? If you, or someone going with you, wants to take photographs at the shoot, check the notes on the target list in case it isn't allowed. If it is allowed, the person taking photographs is usually asked to sign to say the photos will not be published (unless special guidelines are followed) .

### What to wear

As usual, wear things which will not interfere with your shooting – so a normal close-fitting top is what you need. In cold weather it's a good idea to have a fleecy jacket or some other top you can slip in and out of to keep you warm while you're not shooting. Wear flat-soled shoes that are not too squidgy.

If you've looked at pictures of archery tournaments, you'll have seen that the archers often wear white or plain green clothing. You've probably also seen that some archers are wearing a club uniform, probably with white trousers or skirt. If the shoot you're going to is an important one that has 'Record Status' – that means everything about the venue, setup and organisation is to the top standards, and if anyone at the shoot beats a national record for their class then their score will be recognised as a new national record – then you must wear the kind of clothes described above. Your first shoot probably won't be a Record Status shoot, so you can wear whatever you like, but you'll still find quite a lot of the entrants will be wearing whites or club colours, and if you have white or green clothes (or club colours) you may like to wear them on the day.

## **AT THE VENUE**

### **When you Arrive**

The tournament organiser needs to know who has actually turned up, so as soon as possible after arriving find where the Organiser's Registration Table is, and sign in. You will probably be asked to show your GNAS card (this may still be a temporary one issued by the Club), and quite often asked for your Handicap.

### **Start Time**

This is either listed as 'Assembly' or 'Sighters'

*Assembly* is when the Organiser welcomes everybody and introduces the Judges

*Sighters* are the practice shots you are allowed before the start of the shoot proper, and usually start about five minutes after Assembly. Sighters are also like a rehearsal because they are shot in exactly the same way as the first set of arrows, but do not actually count. The real shoot starts immediately after sighters, without a break.

Make sure you allow enough time for the journey so you get there at least half an hour before the start, preferably an hour or more, so you can find a place to get your equipment set up without rushing. Many people will get there over an hour before the start.

Try to get yourself calm and collected before the start, go to the toilet if you need to, have a drink and something light to eat if you feel you need it.

Check you've put your bow together properly (if it's a take-down bow, are the limbs the right way up? Is the string on right way up?) Is the sight fixed on, and has it been set to the position you use for the first target distance?

### **Field Layout**

One difference you'll see right away is that many of the archers will have erected tents near their shooting positions, and sometimes they leave very little space for other competitors. They should leave clear alleys between tents for access, but this is not always the case. You will need to claim a space for yourself, your seat and your equipment, so it's a good idea to arrive early, particularly if you're hoping to erect a tent yourself. There should also be an extra line called the Equipment Line marked across the field in front of the seating area, and all equipment not actually being carried in their hands by archers should be kept behind this line. There may also be another line, the Wait Line between the Equipment Line and the Shooting line. The idea is to keep a clear area behind the archers standing on the shooting line, and anyone waiting their turn mustn't cross the line until their position on the shooting line is free.

The Targets will have numbers on them, and the shooting positions will also be numbered on the shooting line. Find the shooting position for your target, and set up your equipment as close as possible. If you have a tent or fishing umbrella make sure it's properly guy-ed down in case the wind blows it away.

When it's your turn to shoot, you should stand over the line exactly as you do at the club, but this time you also need to stand in the same position each time you shoot, either over your target number marker, or to the left or to the right of it. Individual shooting positions are usually worked out amicably between the group of archers on the target.

### **Preliminaries**

Before the tournament starts the Organiser will call everyone to Assembly, and will give out information about how the shoot will be run, and about any special arrangements, and will introduce the officials for the shoot. The judge will then make a few announcements to do with the kind of 'round' you will be shooting (to remind everyone who's forgotten) and to explain how scores are to be taken so that nobody writes down their own score on their score sheet.

The Judge will then tell you how soon the shoot will start, and the archers then go back to their equipment, do any last minute checks (like is your sight set to the correct position?), and when the whistle blows the first detail will go to the line and start to shoot.

The period between Assembly and the Start Whistle is a good moment to meet your target companions (they will probably be checking their position on the shooting line and looking at the score sheets - which will probably be placed near the shooting position - to confirm the shooting order). Take the opportunity to explain that this is your first tournament, they will then probably be helpful and supportive and make sure you're not asked to do any of the odd tasks that crop up during a shoot unless you particularly want to.

All archery tournaments consist of a 'Round', or Rounds. A round is a set number of shots at targets places at set distances. The most arrows you are likely to shoot at any one distance is six dozen, it's more likely to be four or three dozen. At most tournaments the shooting will pause for a break after each distance, or after three dozen arrows.

## **SHOOTING**

Once started, the shoot will continue until the next break, which will probably take between one-and-a-half and two hours (it takes around half an hour to shoot and score one dozen arrows). There's usually time between your 'ends' to nip to the loo if you need to, but you will have to time it so you don't miss your turn shooting!

### **Your 'Detail'**

You will probably be one of a group of four archers or six shooting at the target boss, and in most tournaments the group divides into two smaller sub-groups - called 'details' - which shoot alternately. The word 'detail' refers to where your name is on the Target List, whether your name is in the first or second half of the list for the target you will be shooting at. It really just means who shoots first when the shoot starts; but you need to know whether you are first or second detail because the shooting order swaps around each time the two sub-groups shoot, So, if you are the first detail, at the beginning you will be in the first sub-group to go onto the shooting line and shoot their arrows; then the second detail sub-group will go onto the line and shoot. After you've scored your points at the target and come back again, the 'details' swap around, so this time the second detail will shoot first, followed by the first. The next time round the first detail shoots first. The only time this swap-over doesn't happen in all outdoor shoots is after everyone has shot their 'sighters' – which are the six practice arrows you are allowed before the shoot starts properly.

Your position in the List of archers on your boss can also determine whether you may be expected to take on other duties during the shoot – for instance, the third name on the list is normally the 'Target Captain' who is responsible for the orderly conduct of scoring and arrow pulling. As it's your first tournament, if you find you name is third, do explain to your target companions that you are a novice and don't feel confident to take on the duties of Target Captain – they'll understand! Similarly, you probably should not do any scoring until you are more experienced, because even if you are a competent scorer and have plenty of experience at club level, you are likely to shoot less well if you have to split your attention between shooting and scoring.

### **Shooting Procedure**

Shooting is controlled by the judge using a whistle.

One blast of the whistle means shooting can start, and the archers whose turn it is (that's one or other 'detail') walk forward with their bows and take up their positions on the line. The archers on the line shoot an 'end' of three arrows only, and return from the line to the wait area. As soon as the first archer in a position has left the line, the second archer will go to their position on the shooting line and shoot three arrows, and return to the wait area. The first archer now returns and shoots three more and returns to the wait area, and the second archer goes forward to the shooting line and shoots their second set of three.

(Occasionally arrows are shot in 'ends' of six, but this will probably not be the case at your first tournament. The procedure is similar, except each archer will only go the line once, and shoot all six arrows before returning to the wait area. This will be made clear at Assembly.)

When you are going to line to take up your position, and when you are starting to walk back, it's considered polite to be aware of what the people on either side of you are doing, and to be careful not to disturb them in mid-shot by your movement, so wait to make your move until they are between shots. This works both ways, because hopefully they will also be considerate to you when you are shooting.

When everyone has finished shooting their six arrows, and all have left the line, the judge will blow two whistle blasts, and all the archers go forward to the targets to take their scores.

As you walk forward look out for arrows sticking out of the ground that have fallen short, so you don't trip over them and damage them or yourself. Remove any of your arrows that have fallen short, but you should wait until all the scores have been taken before going behind the target to retrieve any arrows that have fallen beyond. When you reach the targets look for your arrows in the target and try to see where they all are so you can call out their score values when asked. As there may be as many as thirty six arrows in the target, finding your arrows may be harder than you expected. At this point do not touch your arrows. When everyone has had a few moments to see their arrows, the scorer will ask for each archer's score in turn. When it's your turn to call your scores, call out the arrow scores, starting with the highest. As you call, point to each arrow nock so everyone can see where your arrows are, but make sure you don't actually touch the arrow. The rules say that if you do touch an arrow you will not be allowed to call it as a 'line-cutter', that's to say that if your arrow is nearly all in one score 'zone' but touching or cutting the dividing line around the next higher scoring zone, the arrow usually scores the value of the higher zone (the one nearer the centre), but if you touch the arrow it can only score the lower value.

Chances are your first outdoor tournament will be a GNAS Round, which will be scored using the 'five-zone' system. There are five colour rings on the target. The yellow centre area (which is always called 'gold') scores nine points. The score zones run from the tiny cross in the very centre (called the 'pinhole' because old-time hand-drawn target faces had a hole in centre where the compass point was pushed in) out to the black line round the white zone, and arrows hitting the zones score points as follows: nine for the gold; seven for the red; five for the blue; three for the black; and one for the white. If you are shooting a FITA or Metric Round, the scoring is slightly different - see note at the end of the .page

Call out your scores in batches of three values. Give a value to every arrow, even the ones that miss. So you might call 'nine, seven, seven' (pause) 'five, three, miss'. A good scorer will call back to you what's been written down (in the pause, and at the end). If you realise you've made a mistake, tell the scorer as soon as possible. So

long as all the arrows are still in the target it is possible to call the Judge over to make corrections on the score sheets.

When all the arrows have been scored, the person taking the scores should tell you when it's OK to pull the arrows out (you have to resist the temptation to pull them out too soon, because sometimes people notice a mistake a few seconds after the scores have been taken, and if the arrows have already been pulled it's too late to make any corrections). Take a fair share of the arrow pulling - unless you find the target bosses are very hard and you're finding it very difficult to pull the arrows out, if so let someone more experienced do it. Don't forget to make sure there's no-one standing close behind you who could get spiked as the arrows come out of the boss.

You are allowed six practice 'sighter' arrows before your arrows start to count, so you will shoot once as the first on the line and once as the second on the line during sighters (but of course you may be second onto the shooting line for your first 'end' of three arrows). You should use these shots to make final adjustments to your sight; from then on you should check your sight quite often to make sure it's still screwed up tight and isn't moving.

#### **'Bouncers'**

If one (or more) of your arrows bounces out of the target, shoot the remaining arrows, then step back from the line, look for the judge, and hold your bow up in the air (and try to get the judge's attention). The judge will come over and supervise you making another shot.

#### **Waiting your turn**

It's often quite crowded in the seating and waiting area, so make sure you don't step backwards onto someone else's gear, or trip over anyone or their equipment.

Also, try to keep your voice down to a reasonable level, as noise hubbub can be quite distracting at the shooting line.

And finally – this applies to parents and companions too – don't give any advice or information by talking or signalling to anyone (friend, club-mate, your child) on the line shooting. It's quite tempting to tell them where the arrow went if they look as if they didn't see, but there is a specific rule which says they must not be given any information, and if the Judge thinks an archer is getting help, it will be the archer who gets penalised.

#### **CONTINUING TO THE END – and after**

The shoot will probably consist of at least seventy two shots, or maybe ninety six, or one hundred and eight or even one hundred and forty four, so that's twenty six or more trips to the shooting line including sighters. As you go on, you may find you're making friends with your target companions. Enjoy yourself, keep cool, and don't get wound up if you shoot an occasional bad end.

Once you've started scoring your arrows (after the sighters), every other trip to the targets to score means you've shot another dozen arrows. The person writing the scores down will add up the sub-totals for each dozen, which are...

**Hits** - the number of times you hit the scoring area of the target

**Score** - the points you won for this dozen arrows

**Golds** - the number of times you hit the yellow centre of the target

The Score of the dozen is added to the accumulated total for all the previous dozens to make the **Running Total**, which goes into the column at the far right side of the score sheet.

Some tournaments have a *Leader Board* showing what the highest scores are running at, if so the helpers will need to collect everyone's score after each dozen. This shouldn't have any effect on you unless you are doing the scoring for the group, however you'll probably find that the scorer will ask you what you think your score is, by way of confirmation.

### **Changing Distance**

After you've shot three or four dozen scoring arrows you will probably be at the end of the first 'Distance'. At practically every tournament the shooting position remains in the same place and the targets are moved to the new distance. At some shoots all the targets will be moved by members of the host club, but more often than not the Senior Gentlemen are asked to help move the targets to the new positions – but generally final adjustment will be carried out by the tournament organiser's team. If you are a senior gent, and are fit and able to carry, or help carry, a target, then offer to help with the move. You may find the target bosses are much heavier than the ones you're used to, because many clubs use very dense straw bosses. Some clubs also use rather unstable tripod mounts that can also be difficult to handle. It's probably a good idea not to offer to help with the first move, but to watch how others lift and move the bosses as they will probably have experience of the type of bosses and stands used – if in doubt ask for advice from your target companions. Your home coaches will also be able to give some guidance to help reduce the risk of damaging yourself.

### **End of Shooting**

The person writing the scores down now has the unenviable job of totalling all the Hits, Golds and Score. If you've been keeping your score on your own score pad, you'll be able to add up your totals too, to check that you agree with the scorer. You will be asked to sign the score sheet to say you agree that the score is correct – make sure you don't rush off without signing, otherwise you won't win any prizes or get listed in the final results. In fact don't rush off in a hurry anyway, take the opportunity to say thanks to the scorer for doing the work, and say goodbye to your target companions (or say thanks for a good day if you all got on well together).

Now you can put away your equipment ready to go home. But the end of the shoot will usually be followed by the prize-giving as soon as the results have been worked out by the Organisers and put in order. Sometimes this is fairly fast, say twenty minutes at small shoot, but sometimes it can take forty minutes or as much as an hour. Let's hope you're lucky and go to a tournament with a rapid results system! And of course the prize giving itself will take half an hour or so.

Some shoots are Handicap Shoots, where the prizes are given for the highest 'handicap-adjusted' scores; and even at 'normal' tournaments, when the winners are the entrants with highest actual score, some handicap-adjusted awards are often given. This is why you were asked to find out your Handicap at the start – the handicap system does actually favour 'improving' archers rather than ones who have already peaked and are at the top of their form – so you may be in for a pleasant surprise if you've had a good day!

About a week after the tournament you should receive a full results list, showing everybody's score, and you will be able to see how you compared with the others. Sometimes these days the results will be put on a website belonging to the organising club later on in the evening of the tournament, but in most cases it does take a few days.

**NOTE – Scoring FITA and Metric Rounds**

FITA and Metric archery rounds are scored using a ‘ten-zone’ system. There are five colour rings on the target, and each is divided into two equal-width score zones. This makes ten zones in all, so the two zones in the yellow centre area scores either ten or nine points. You may have noticed there is an even smaller circle inside the inner half of the gold zone – this ‘inner-ten-ring’ area is the area where archers shooting compound bows must get their arrows in order to score ten points, the rest of us only have to get our arrows in the inner half of the yellow circle. The score zones run from the tiny cross in the very centre out to the black line round the white zone, and arrows hitting the zones score ten, nine for the gold; eight, seven for the red; six, five for the blue; four, three for the black; and two one for the white.

If you are shooting a FITA or Metric Round the ‘Golds’ recorded on the score sheets are only the hits in the ‘ten’ zone, the inner half of the yellow circle.



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