

CHAPTER 8

THE SHOOTS

The conduct of 3-D events is as important as the physical design of the course. I have seen clubs host excellent shoots, having no more assets than a set of targets and 50 acres of borrowed land. These shoots were challenging, smoothly executed and fun. Alternatively, I've seen other instances where clubs, having every imaginable feature (clubhouse, practice field, practice course, 3-D course, etc., etc.), run such poorly coordinated events that archers began to avoid the club's shoots.

There are many factors which may affect how popular a club's shoots are. But this popularity is measured by how satisfied the archers are after the day's rounds. This is what will determine if they return. Some of the things you might need to take into consideration are;

1. The shooting classifications, including equipment types.
2. The relative experience of archers.
3. The numbers of ladies.
4. The number of juniors.
5. The timing of the shoot, when in the 3-D season is it?
6. The purpose of the shoot; the development of younger archers, practice for hunting season, a strict competition among the best local archers, etc.

Unfortunately, clubs are often run by a small core group of archers. This group tends to be a cohesive inner circle of friends. They commonly all shoot in the same classification and they tend to push the club's goals and shoots toward what they see as the ideal. That is, to support their desires. This is an attitude which can destroy a club and ensure few archers enjoy that club's events. Every club must ensure that their Director of Shooting is supported by a team of archers with differing backgrounds: novice and experienced, traditional and compound.

What are some of the aspects that lead to a successful archery event? I'll list them below and briefly describe what each means. Some of these are rather intangible and hard to measure, others will have an immediate and positive effect on the archers you are serving.

THE DIRECTOR OF SHOOTING

Each archery club has its President, Vice-president, Treasurer and other executive members as decided by the club members. To coordinate and organize shooting events, however, the most important club member is the Director of Shooting. The Director may be an elected member of the executive or a temporary position which changes for each event. Spreading it out eases the burden.

The Director of Shooting will be responsible to the club President for the organization and conduct of 3-D (or other shooting) events. His responsibilities will include organizing club members to help set up and run the event, publicity, deciding on the order and placement of targets, and acting as master of ceremonies. The Director will be the visible and vocal club member for the day. The Director, to be most effective, must delegate responsibility without trying to do everything himself. Organize and task members, make decisions, and remain in control without letting your helpers change the plan

The Director of Shooting most important work will be in establishing the order and placement of targets. He (or she) will be the knowledgeable authority on the day's course. On the day of the shoot, The Director will give the pre-shoot briefing, ensuring that all necessary information is passed to the participating archers.

PUBLICITY

Let's face it, the core of the issue here is that clubs need archers to attend their shoots so that they can make enough money to pay for targets. Targets are expensive and need regular repair and replacement, this costs money. So - how do we get archers to our shoots. The simple answer is publicity. Now, this doesn't have to cost much money to be effective, but we should keep in mind who we are trying to reach. I have found that in relation to attendance at shoots there are three main groups of archers: the club members, that group of archers in each area that search out and will travel (often up to 100 miles) to shoots, and those archers who don't shoot 3-D, either ever or seldom. It is the second and third groups we must reach. But how?

In reaching archers with information about 3-D shoots, we must consider a few things. These are; where to reach them, by what method (how), and what to tell them.

Where. Unfortunately, by the nature of the sport, archers are individuals, you can't catch them all in one place at one time, so an information campaign must be widespread to be effective. Some of the places you will find archers congregating include;

- a. Local archery shops.
- b. Other stores which also sell archery supplies, in some areas hardware stores, outfitters and general sports shops get some archery business. Think what archers buy other than bows - camping/hunting supplies such as clothing, equipment, boats and anything else which might support a hunting trip.
- c. Sporting shows, perhaps a club booth will attract the attention you need, not only for new members but also to make your club and its events known to a wider group of archers. If necessary, consider sharing a booth with another club and/or an archery or sporting goods shop.
- d. Other clubs' shoots.

How. The possible ways of getting your message across are limited only by your imagination. Some of the means I have seen employed effectively include;

- a. Association mailings reach out to many active archers and are an inexpensive forum to issue detailed direction and shoot schedules.
- b. Wallet cards are a very handy means of passing on the club's schedule. Everyone keeps them in their wallets and club members always seem to have a spare to pass on.
- c. Exchanges with other clubs through mailing or visits when members shoot their courses can spread the word.
- d. Information flyers and posters at local shops and other sporting clubs can reach the occasional archer and those in the area that just didn't know your club existed.
- e. Newspapers, especially items in community events listings, get read and remembered. Your club might consider getting the attention of the local sports writer to get him (or her) out to a shoot. If an article appears it would be well worth the effort.
- f. Your club's members are its best means of advertising. Every time they are in an archery shop, they should be passing the word. Use them also to deliver all your other ads, save on postage through the use of the member's normal activities to deliver flyers, posters, cards, etc.

What. The information you pass is as important as the effort you have gone through to reach your audience. Sometimes, the information may be limited by the medium, a newspaper community events item may only give the club name, the date of a shoot and a contact number. Other means should be as complete as possible to ensure you pass all necessary information that an archer may need to get to your club. Some of the more important points you should pass are;

- a. Dates; when are the shoots taking place, if appropriate, differentiate between the open and "members only" shoots.
- b. Timings; when do things get under way, in particular registration and the start of the first round.
- c. Routes; how do you get to the club? This can be a brief description by Highway numbers, road names and distances. When the method permits, use a simple map, ensuring it really is clear enough for someone unfamiliar with the area to follow.
- d. Boots; we all know that some clubs are on wet terrain, but if we haven't been there before or attend infrequently, we may not know to bring our boots. Not doing so when we should have can put an undeserved poor shadow on what otherwise may be an excellent 3-D event. If certain equipment should not be left behind, a reminder in the club's literature might be advisable. Boots are one possible item, also consider sun protection (sunscreen, hats) and insect repellent for reminders.
- e. Lunch; does the club serve lunch? If so, ensuring that archers know this may increase the numbers who take advantage of it. Alternatively, if you don't, and archers come expecting it because "*their club always does it!*", some inadvertent bad impressions may be left.
- f. Events; are there any special events an archer can shoot? Some clubs have the steel deer/bear, others have 50/50 shoots for charity.

APPEARANCE

Few aspects of an archery course will turn off visiting archers quicker than their initial impressions of the club grounds. Once they are there, they'll probably shoot, but what's important is - will they return?

Signs. Ensure archers can find their way to the course. A few simple signs leading in from the highway or nearby major road junctions greatly ease the minds of drivers who don't know the way. Remember, it's not easy to ask directions at 7:30 Sunday morning on a back road and, chances are, even most of the locals don't really know where your club is.

Cleanliness. This is a big one, the most obvious indicator of how well run the club is and the shoot is the appearance of the club grounds. Check around your course, are old target materials properly disposed of? Is there any litter lying about? Are there receptacles for garbage along the course? All these things contribute to a good club image. Good housekeeping practices reduce distractions and help archers enjoy the shoot enough to come back.

ORGANIZATION

When you coordinate with other members to set up the shoot, remember that it includes the physical preparation of the range AND the work that must be done on the day of the event to ensure its success. Recruit as many "volunteers" as needed to cover off all the necessary and the desirable positions. Some of the jobs you will need or might consider include;

- a. Registration.

- b. Canteen; morning coffee and lunch.
- c. Guides; if necessary, place a club member in each shooting group to help guide archers new to the course.
- d. Parking attendants; a few people to orchestrate the parking area will maximize the number of vehicles in the club parking area and may simplify getting everyone out at the day's end.
- e. Special event coordinators.

HOSPITALITY

The casual attitudes and the close circle of archers that usually attend shoots in an area can be a detriment in some cases. Archers new to the club or to the local 3-D circuit can feel somewhat alienated and left out. To alleviate this, have someone ready to greet arrivals. Perhaps a member of the club executive, or just a member helping with the shoot, can do this. This person can meet archers as they arrive, let them know where to park, where to register, when the shoot starts and, most importantly: that they can be approached if the archers have any questions or comments throughout the day.

Hospitality from the club's position as a host can also include;

- a. Having morning coffee and donuts ready for sale.
- b. Arranging for lunch, either made at the clubhouse or delivered from members homes or a local fast food restaurant.
- c. Placing a pop cooler along the course with a money tin and a garbage container a few targets further along.

TIMINGS

Pay attention to this one, folks. Nothing, and I mean NOTHING, will frustrate archers more than late starts that drag out the day and add hours to when people get back home. Remember, some of the archers you want to have at your shoots travel long distances and got up pretty early to get to your club for your declared start time. It's a simple courtesy to start the shoot as close to the posted time as possible. I have found that at clubs that are notorious for starting late, it is usually members that arrive five minutes before and hold up the shoot. They do this "because the club never starts on time, anyway!"

When thinking about timing and promptness, also consider ensuring that the second round starts on time. Do not drag out lunch (so local members can go home to eat) and be prepared to process scores quickly to close off the day in a timely fashion.

THE "LEVEL PLAYING FIELD"

One of the aspects of 3-D shoots I have found that makes some clubs less popular is an unwillingness or inability to serve the various classifications of archers equally. I call this idea the requirement to provide a "level playing field." The intention of the level playing field is that the structure of the 3-D event should reduce, not emphasize, the effect of basic differences. In this case the fundamental difference we need to offset is that of classification (primarily equipment). The factor in the shoot structure we can alter to balance the effects of classification is the siting and range of targets.

To cover this in simple terms I will employ a hunting analogy and compare traditional to sighted compound equipment classes. Both types of bows are approved for hunting, yet the traditional hunter will usually practice and hunt at shorter ranges than the compound archer. However, with practice

each archer should achieve the same level of success (based on accuracy) within **his own effective range**.

Quite often at 3-D shoots, traditional archers are expected to shoot from the same positions as compound archers, resulting in a wide separation of scores. Unfortunately, this leaves some people with the impression that traditional archers are not as good, or that their equipment is not sufficient for important, i.e., hunting, use. The problem is that this misconception develops from the traditional archer being expected to shoot from beyond what he knows is the best effective range of his bow. Traditional archers, especially when shoots are established to prepare archers for hunting season, should be shooting at ranges which give them a fair (ethical) chance for each shot. If all things were accounted for and each archer was given shots he would realistically be expected to attempt and successfully complete, the top traditional scores should rival those of the compound shooters scores.

When the traditional shooting positions are such that their top scores are similar to those of the compound archers, and a similar spread exists in each classification to reflect varying degrees of experience, then a "level playing field" exists.

SITING THE SHOTS

Beyond ensuring that each shot on our course can be executed safely, certain considerations should be kept in mind when siting the individual shots within each shooting lane. Siting shots for ethical hunting practice and ensuring that all shots are possible, though perhaps difficult for average archers, is necessary. Only a few difficult shots are needed over the run of a 20-target course to spread the scores of the top few shooters.

The Ethical Shot. The basic reason for taking care to situate shots that simulate ethical hunting shots comes from the origins of 3-D archery itself. While it has developed into a division of archery in its own right, 3-D archery has its origin and primary attraction in helping the bowhunter maintain skills for hunting. With this in mind, shots which may be considered unethical as a hunting shot because of extreme range, obstacles or that for other reasons may teach bad lessons during the shooting of the course should be avoided. In particular, keeping the majority of shots in the realm of good hunting opportunities helps newer bowhunters identify what they should be looking for when they hunt.

The Possible Shot. Keep in mind the different types of bows which will be shot on your course, and the range of experience the archers will bring. Slower bows require more vertical space for the arcing flight of the arrow. Brush which one archer can easily see and shoot over may be an impenetrable screen to a shorter archer. The occasional target sited at extreme range and some moving targets can challenge and help to separate the top few archers. Too frequent use of long ranges and screened targets frustrates shooters and fails to provide the training and practice most participants seek.

TYPES OF 3-D SHOTS

To serve the larger community of 3-D archers, clubs must be careful in how they establish their shoots, remembering the broader context of the sport's participation. In addition to catering to the diversity of classifications, clubs organizing shoots should also consider the purpose of each event. Many clubs and archers start their 3-D seasons as early as April-May, running into and even beyond the fall hunting season. The long 3-D season will allow clubs to develop a series of progressive shoots building up to intense competitions and then preparing bowhunters for the hunting season. To this end, the following sections outline a range of shoot formats, along with brief notes on factors and setup suggestions for their design.

"THE SHOTS"

THE EARLY SEASON SHOOT

In April or May of each year archers, like bear, come out of hibernation and begin to think about the shooting season. Some have had the opportunity to shoot indoors throughout the long winter but most hung up their bows at the end of hunting season or as the weather turned too cold for enjoyable shooting. But now that the snow has receded, making arrow searches a somewhat more viable activity, the most archers think about the new 3-D season about to begin.

It's also time for the new bow, the different style of release, or perhaps just a new fletching style. For some, it is time to make a radical change and move from recurve to compound, or perhaps from radical cams to longbow. Whether we are about to try new equipment or not, for the early spring 3-D shoots, most archers seek an opportunity to stretch muscles and start getting ready for a new season. The events we want don't test our rusty skills too harshly, and should not cost too much in terms of personal confidence or arrows.

The early season shoot will see archers shooting for the first time in months, people with unfamiliar equipment, and wives and children just joining the sport. It is an appropriate time to present a course featuring shorter ranges and clear target lanes. The course should be relatively "uncomplicated," but not necessarily easy, and designed to build early season confidence.

THE MID-SEASON SHOOT

Now that the club's archers have been practicing a month or two, it is time to consider increasing the difficulty of the 3-D shoots we establish. Shoots for the mid-season should see the challenges increase as we begin to testing the limits of individual skills with narrower lanes, windows, and moving targets. Care must be taken now to avoid the ridiculously difficult shot and those that present obvious ethical dilemmas as hunting shots.

Shots for the mid-season should enable the archers to hone his shooting skills and, for those who hunt, help to define what shots are possible and which should be avoided. Lengthening of ranges out to the maximums presented in the FCA National Round Rules can be included, but the majority of ranges should be in a reasonable bracket. I've presented below a table showing a possible range distribution for a mid-season shoot. Note that the average distance remains in the 25-30 yard bracket, but that maximum shots to 50 yards are included, as well as minimum range shots in the 10-15 yard bracket (senior, male, compound archers ranges given here). Using this type of distribution of shots ensures archers are offered a variety of range situations with emphasis on reasonable (hunting) ranges.

As we increase ranges to present greater challenges, the archers preparing the course must take care to maintain a "level playing field." Traditional and junior shooting positions can be lengthened but must be done so that similar increases in difficulty occur, not just a simple and equal increase in range.

RANGE DISTRIBUTION CHART - MID-SEASON SHOOT

Number of targets (of 20)	Range Bracket (yards)		
	Senior males (Compound)	Traditional & Ladies	Juniors
2	40-50	30-35	20-25

4	30-40	25-30	18-20
8	25-30	20-25	13-18
4	15-25	15-20	10-13
2	10-15	10-15	7-10

THE PRE-HUNT SHOOT

The 3-D season is now three to four months old, and many of the archers we've been shooting with all season are starting to turn their thoughts to preparing for the hunt. Bows are being silenced, carbon arrows are being put away and aluminum fletched, broadheads are being tuned and archers are looking to polish their shots for their own comfortable hunting ranges.

Our shoot format should shift with the intentions of the archers we support. What can we do to help confirm final bow tuning, firm up individual self-confidence and prepare for hunting season? What are hunters looking for at this point in the 3-D shooting season? Consider the situations in which a hunter might find or place him(or her)self for a good hunting shot. Some of the planning factors which should be considered are;

- a. Keeping ranges within the International Bowhunter Education Program (IBEF) recommended ranges. These are 40 yards in open country and 30 yards in close country.
- b. Emphasis on clean, ethical shooting situations for hunter skill measurement and development of individual confidence. Keep the lanes and windows open to the extent that the average hunter would actually take the shot.
- c. Maximize downhill shots in areas where treestand hunting is popular. Few clubs can afford more than one treestand, but the use of downhill shots where the ground and space permits can increase the amount of practice for this type of shot the course can offer.
- d. Apply the range distribution chart below, it has been designed to emphasize ranges as quoted by the IBEF.

RANGE DISTRIBUTION CHART - PRE-HUNT SHOOT

Number of targets (of 20)	Range Bracket (yards)		
	Senior males (Compound)	Traditional & Ladies	Juniors
2	35-40	25-30	18-20
4	30-35	23-25	15-18
8	20-30	17-23	12-15
4	15-20	15-17	10-12
2	10-15	10-15	7-10

THE TRADITIONAL SHOOT

There are very few purely traditional clubs around, and many clubs with a mainstream of compound shooters tend to forget the distinct nature of traditional equipment. For a club to be prepared to serve the full spectrum of archers, it is appropriate that we consider what aspects might make a good traditional shoot. There are some very good reasons for any club to ensure traditional archers enjoy their courses; although any one club in an area may not have a great number of traditional shooters, there is usually a core group in an area that will travel about and support the clubs that meet their needs. Also, traditional equipment does not put the wear on target that compounds do, yet these archers pay the same for each round. Lastly, traditional archers seldom return in numbers to a club that has abused them by having them shoot from the same extreme ranges as the unlimited compound archers, this only results in bad publicity and lost revenues.

While a club may not host a purely traditional shoot, my comments here can also be applied to the siting of shooting stations for traditional archers at a mixed event. But don't immediately discard the possibility of a traditional shoot. There may be enough traditional archers in your area to merit running one. Many compound archers still have a recurve in the closet, and these commonly see the light of day for "traditional only" events. Keep in mind here that for traditional, I am generally speaking of any unsighted recurve or longbow firing any style of arrow.

Some of the considerations for a traditional shoot include;

- a. Maximum emphasis on shots sited for realistic use of traditional equipment, with clear lanes and room for the slower arcing trajectory. (A 150 foot per second bow has a trajectory that rises 1 1/2 feet above the line of sight for a target 30 yards away, and 2 1/2 feet above for 40 yards.)
- b. Keep ranges within the expected effective range for the recurves and longbows, up to about 30-35 yards.

THE MASTERS SHOOT (or "ULTIMATE UNLIMITED")

We've all seen them, they shot off at the steel deer from 70 yards, they spend 3-D shoot days bashing the nocks off each others arrows, and they're hell on 3-D targets. Super fast bows, superb technical shooting skills and nerves of steel under a gruff, good humour and camouflage suit. But how do

we deal with them, our usual shoots don't challenge them enough, they almost shoot high possible scores, and we want to see them sweat.

I've considered for a while that there should be a specific shoot format to sort out these high calibre archers that cruise our courses like snipers. I call this The Masters Shoot, or "Ultimate Unlimited."

With this style of shoot we want to present a serious challenge for the best shooters. The Masters Shoot is designed to test the top echelon of unlimited style archer. It could also be open to other classes, but keep in mind that some variations on the Masters rules may be necessary for other classes (different shooting stations, etc.) to "re-level the playing field."

The characteristics of the Masters Shoot include;

- a. A 20-target round, these can all be 3-D or, because some people shoot better on one type of target than others, various target types may be incorporated. The possibilities include 3-D, paper animal, FITA face, and FITA bowhunter face (black-white-black) targets of different sizes.
- b. One arrow per target per round.
- c. Target ranges should be fairly extreme compared to our regular 3-D events. Start pushing the unlimited archers out to 50-60(+) yards, but also throw in a few at close range, maybe even one or two small targets inside their 20 yard pins.
- d. Don't forget to change the shooting station markings between the rounds. Some excellent archers have wonderful increases in their afternoon scores because they have a capacity to remember ranges from the morning.
- e. With the emphasis on testing the top shooters in the area, other archers may prefer to sit out and watch. Consider developing a site which permits free movement of spectators with and between the Masters groups.
- f. If you have a lot of spectators planning to attend, draft some as independent scorers. This will help to increase the pressure of competition shooting.
- g. To sweeten the pot for the Masters' Shoot, you might consider charging participants an extra fee and awarding money prizes. Having all the extra money collected returned to the top 3-6 archers (depending on the number of participants) will make it more attractive.

THE COMPETITION SHOOT

When regional or provincial championship rounds are being held, the host club will be expected to employ national round rules. I've included a copy of the FCA rules at the back of the book.