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BAREBOW

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Styles of Barebow shooting

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There comes a time when some archers want to experience other forms of archery, one of which is BAREBOW. It gets its title by the fact that the bow has to be stripped of most of the attachments that have been added to the bow; such as the sight and its fixing block any form of draw length checking and no visible marks on the belly of the bow (nearest to the archer). Also, the string serving must be out of the archers' vision (above the eye or below the eye) at all distances when at full draw. No kissers or nosers are allowed on the string. Because the various Organisations have their own rules it is always best to ensure that you do comply with them as they do change from time to time.

My main experience has been in GNAS and FITA and a few NFAS shoots over the fifty odd years I have been shooting target, field faces, 2D and 3D so the information I give is concerning these organisations.

If you are trying out Barebow shooting for the first time then you can just comply with the most important rule to start with, which is that your bow is bare and that the top end of your centre serving is not within your eye sight which will ensure that your practice is more realistic. I will give you my views and relate some past experiences and advice which I have gathered over the years. One of the main important things I did learn was that as long as you "address" what you are aiming at - just as a golfer would - it probably does not matter if you are not directly in line with the centre of the target providing there are no trees or bushes in your line of sight.

1 **STRING WALKING**

SETTING OUT THE DISTANCE PEGS FOR RANGE FINDING:

Find a nice safe area on your field where you will be able to set up your practice target so that you comply with the recommended safety margins for your club's insurance cover. This is a MUST! Bearing in mind the over shoot allowance, set a target up at 40 metres. It is best to reverse the stand with the front legs and brackets facing backwards which will allow you to rest the boss on the ground. Well secure both the stand and the target to avoid any arrow damage.

From the shooting line, set the target up at 40 metres, then set pegs up at distances 6.5-10-16-20-30-40 metres from the target. When shooting from these pegs your front foot should touch the peg which is the common method of standing at the mark.

Suggested distances to find sight settings for a FIELD ROUND

FACE SIZES	DISTANCES
80cm	40 metres 30 metres
60cm	30 metres 20 metres
40cm	20 metres 16 metres
20cm	10 metres 6.5 metres

Firstly, remove the sight and sight fixing block and all stabilisation from the riser and any marks which could be used as a sight mark within your vision when at full draw. Remember, no kissers or nosers are allowed on the bow string and the string serving must be out of your vision at all distances when at full draw. It is a good idea to have a new string made up to comply with these conditions of Barebow shooting and also to have a Barebow tab (with no separator).

RANGE FINDING:

I would suggest that you start range finding from the shortest peg from the target. This would put you forward of the common shooting line in a target club layout so it is important that you have at least the required safety distance at the side to conform with the safety guidelines of your Governing Body. You need to determine the finger position on the face which you find the most comfortable for you. For example; The first finger under the cheekbone, which is my own preference (as in picture 1) or middle finger tip in the corner of your mouth. It is important that it is one you can repeat consistently.

Picture 1



Picture 2



Start with three fingers under the arrow (as in picture 2) and, using the pile of the arrow as a sight, you will be varying the distance between the top finger and the arrow

Picture 3



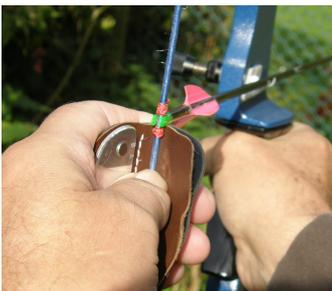
At the shortest distance target, place 3 fingers **UNDER** your nocked arrow then place your thumb just below your third finger (as in picture 3). Then move your top finger down to this position so that you have a 3 finger gap between your nocked arrow and your top finger (as in picture 4). Draw the bow, placing your top finger on your chosen face location. If you have chosen the “under cheekbone” position your arrow will be near your sighting eye. For **SAFETY** reasons it is therefore very important that your arrow nock has a good and firm grip on the string and cannot be dislodged whilst you are on aim.

Picture 4



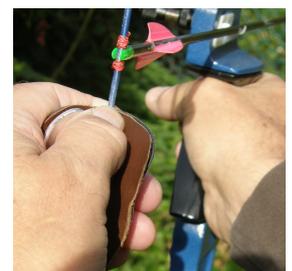
Aim the pile (point) of the arrow on the centre of the target (aiming spot) and loose. Shoot another arrow in exactly the same manner. Both arrows should be close to each other. If they are high of centre follow a similar procedure, as described in the first paragraph but bring your thumb down to the little finger, then move your top finger down to this position so that you have a 4 finger gap between your nocked arrow and your top finger. Draw the bow to your chosen face position and, once again, aim at the aiming spot on the target for the next 2 arrows. If they have entered the target too low then adjust the finger position on the string until they hit the mark. Generally, bringing the fingers further down the string will shorten the distance of the arrow flight and the further up the string (towards the nock) will lengthen the distances. At the four finger position the bow may be too much out of tiller so to avoid going down that much, you will have to aim below the centre (imagine a target below and make mental notes).

Picture 5



Move to the next peg further from the target and, this time, allow approximately 1 finger width less for each 10 metres longer distance (as in pictures 5 & 6). This will be a guide only as, of course; individuals have different size fingers and various poundage of bow draw weight. For fine tuning between distances, some field archers count the number of twists on their serving thread and, with this method, and the ability to put it into practice, they can be very accurate indeed.

Picture 6



As you get further away from the target you will reach a distance where your top finger will be just under the arrow (as in Picture 2) allowing you to aim with the pile (point) on the aiming spot on the target and the arrow will hit the aiming spot. This is known as “**Point of Aim**”. For Ladies this will be around 28 to 30 metres and for gentlemen between 30 to 40 metres, depending on bow draw weight and weight of arrows.

Ah! How about left and right arrows which could be another problem? The main causes of left/right arrows are as follows:-

- Archer is not checking string alignment down bow limb
- Arrows are too weak or too strong. For a right handed archer stiff arrows would go to the left and whippy arrows would go to the right. The reverse is the case for a left handed archer.
- The arrow is not set correctly to the centre line of the bow.
- Poor Loose!

After finding your “**string walking**” distances at the target, try to relate them to your finger positions by placing all three string fingers under the arrow (when on the string) so that the first finger is touching the underside of the nocked arrow. Normally, with a cheek anchor, this would be around the 40-45 metre mark for a 38-40lb bow for men, and 30-35 metres for ladies shooting a 26-28lbs bow. Bear in mind though, that these distances will vary according to bow lengths and arrow materials, plus other variables, too many to mention and not forgetting the face anchor position. I will give my finger positions as an example. You can then determine your own for your chosen setup.

With a cheek bone anchor;

40 metres Top finger touching arrow / 30 metres Top of second finger
20 metres Middle of second finger / 15 metres Top of third finger

At the end of page 5 I have included a copy of my sight mark reminder chart as it was in 2012 which I hope may be of some interest. Obviously you are not allowed to refer to this during a competition.

How is it applied? For say a 30 metre distance, place your three fingers around string under the arrow, slide your thumb nail down the string to the top of the second finger then move your hand down the string to the thumb nail. This will be your hand position for 30 metres. If you were shooting at 35 metres you would only move down half the width of your top finger. In time, and with practice, you will remember the relationship between fingers and distances. For distances longer than your “point of aim” you will have to aim above the centre of the target using the target rings and, if you have to aim higher, imagine a target on top of the one you are aiming at. Obviously, for a shorter distance you would aim lower.

Setting up your bow for string walking

Some years ago Iris and I attended various talks given by one of the top English Barebow archers in the world and she explained how she set up her bow. Obviously, at the start, the bow was bare of any additions, apart from a pressure button. Firstly, they found the point of aim (arrow pile on the gold at about 40 metres) where the top finger is touching the arrow and the finger position for the shortest distance, say 6.5 metres. She would screw a longrod in the centre location and place her top finger on the mid-way position on the string (about the 25 metre position). She would then draw up the bow and her husband, or a fellow archer, would look to see if the longrod was parallel to the ground. If not, she altered the tiller, adjusting the limb bolts until at full draw it was parallel to the ground. She would then remove the long rod before re-tuning the bow for this set up which would mainly entail repositioning the arrow nocking point.

It is always good policy to make lots of notes throughout the sight finding exercise because if you do not it will be a wasted session. I must also mention that although you can use your standard riser, some manufactures produce risers specifically for Barebow. Their stabilisation adjustment is one area of change in design of the riser so look out for these risers and decide if they are what you are looking for.

2.	GAP SHOOTING
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“Point of Aim or “Gap Shooting” using the pile of the arrow as a sight.

Start by setting out the practice target in the same way as described in the previous pages. Always start from the nearest peg to the target because, as mentioned previously, it will cut down the time looking for arrows. With whatever type of finger protection you have, place your hand on your chosen face position (anchor) to see if it feels comfortable; whether it is just under the cheekbone, crease of the mouth or under the chin (not normal with field archers unless shooting a light draw weight bow).

Standing with your front foot touching the nearest peg to the target look at the target and, with no arrow in the bow, draw the bow and anchor on your chosen face position. Do this a few times. Next nock an arrow and do the same, but this time line the string up with the centre of the top bow limb by moving your head slightly one side or the other. When you see the string is in the centre of the top limb, look at your arrow pile and keep it in line with the string.

Place the pile on the centre of the target’s lowest edge (where it touches the ground) steady - then loose. Repeat this with two more arrows. You should now have an indication as to what adjustment you need to make with your aim; for example, if your arrows landed near the centre of the target that’s fine, because you now only have to adjust your aim by the amount the arrow is away from the centre. Left and right arrows can be adjusted by moving the pile of the arrow a little left or right of the string or adjusting the pressure button (if fitted). Of course, as you may already know, for a right handed archer if the arrows go left they are weaker and right arrows are stiffer.

Continue with this practice getting further away from the target and aiming 6” higher as you go to each further peg. Once you are aiming at the centre and hitting it this distance is referred to as your **“POINT OF AIM”** which should be between 30 and 45 metres, according to the individual bow weights used (and other variations). Once you are hitting the centre, your aiming point will get higher the further away from the target you are, until you will have to aim above the target. At this stage it is best to imagine a target sitting on top of your target which will give you some reference to work from.

As a well-known ESSEX archer, the late Jack Secombes, who was the Team Manager of the National Field Squad once said to me *“Because of the variety of distances shot throughout a field round, if target archers did some field shooting they would appreciate the value of a well-tuned bow, which would improve their scores”*. Because of the changing distances he was right - the bow has to be perfectly tuned and most target archers appreciate this. So remember that your **bare** bow is now meeting different conditions of draw and forces that it normally works under, so give some thought to whether you should retune your bow!

3.	INSTINCTIVE SHOOTING
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I suppose this style could be put down to ones body’s spacial awareness. Some people have the ability to just look and shoot, whilst others have to stand and assess the distances and gradually, with practice, train the body to recognise the various signs of the shot by target size or object size in relation to its surroundings.

Addressing the target / nocking an arrow / drawing the bow / letting the body shoot the arrow.

Here again, your bow must be bare of all attachments such as sight, sight fixing block, draw length indicators and any mark that could be used as a sight mark. You can use a normal tab and have the normal finger position; one above and two below the arrow, but I believe some Governing Bodies only allow you to have one location on the face i.e. under the chin, on your cheek bone or a finger in the corner of the mouth, or any others you may be comfortable with. Once you have decided which is best you will have to keep to this facial position throughout the shoot. This would also apply to a three finger Barebow tab where all fingers are under the arrow or a shooting glove. (ALWAYS CHECK THE RULES OF THE ASSOCIATION RUNNING THE SHOOT)

Start by standing at the first peg (the one nearest to the target) with your front foot touching it and without an arrow in the bow, look at the target and, with your fingers on the string in the position you intend to have them in competition, look at the target and draw the bow locating on your chosen facial position. Do this a few times to find out if this is comfortable and repeatable for you.

Now nock an arrow, look at the target position, and loose. This is the time when you will see if your instinctive ability is “inbuilt” because the arrow should be somewhere near the spot you were aiming at. If it is – good - shoot a few more to confirm the first arrow then move to the next peg away from the target and repeat the same procedure at each peg, walking back from the target. As previously stated, by doing this walk back method of sighting it cuts down the time looking for arrows. Those who do not have this inbuilt body awareness just have to practice more to give the body the information it requires to recognise the feeling of each shot.

It has been the subject of many a discussion that after the first arrow has been shot all the arrows shot after are NOT instinctive as the archer has had feedback from the first shot so can adjust the aim. Personally I do not get involved with such discussions because since we were born our lives have been full of observation and feedback.

If, as could very well the case, your first arrow did not go exactly where your body aimed it, use the information that the position of the arrow is giving you and repeat the shot until you are hitting the aiming spot. This will take time and patience and, as a final check, randomly walk up to a peg and shoot an arrow or two. This will confirm that your body has taken in the information from such as target size, distance perception and body angles for varying distances. One very important point is that when you are up at full draw if you get the feeling that something is not quite right, come down and start again. The old adage here makes good sense – “**practice makes perfect**”. It will gradually come, as did learning how to walk. In field shooting you will be in groups of 4 spaced around the course so you will not meet many other competitors as you go around. It is therefore important that you have your tea break half way and take the opportunity to socialise with others where you may pick up some useful tips.

I hope these notes are of some value and that you will enjoy the experience of shooting **BAREBOW**.

I wish you good luck and hope to see you around.

Finally, I acknowledge with thanks Iris’s input, photos and typing.

Tom Major (County Coach)
1st November 2014

BAREBOW FIELD 2012			
BOW:			
Hoyt Syntactic Carbon Plus 36 lbs @ 68"			
25" Blue riser			
ARROWS: 29" ACC 500 Yellow fletch			
29" Platinum Plus 1916 Orange fletch			
Face distances	Ave. Dist.	Orange Fletch	Yellow Fletch
80 CM	42.5m	↑ touch ↑	
	37.5m	40 ↓	
	32.5m	30 ↑	1/4 fing
60 CM	27.5m	↓ full	
	22.5m	↑ 20	↑ 1 fing
	18.5m	↓	↓
40 CM	17.5m	↑ 16	↑ 1 1/4 fing
	15.5m	↓ full ↓	
	11.5m	↑ 10	↑ 1 1/2 fing
20 CM	9.5m	↓	↓
	6.5m	↑ 6	↑ 2 fing
	5.5m	↓	↓