

## TOURNAMENTS GUIDE by Rick Andrews

I have been asked to put together an article to introduce people to tournaments who have no or little previous experience. It can be quite daunting to go to your first tournament, but shouldn't be. Also there are the problems of knowing how to book them, what equipment and clothing, what happens at a tournament, etiquette etc. So I am going to try to dispel any fears or reservations you might have.

Once a person gets past the real beginner stage of archery and starts to progress as an archer rather than a beginner, the choice becomes whether just to continue to enjoy your archery on club nights or whether you would like to branch out a bit. Tournaments are for all ages, sexes and abilities. **YOU DO NOT HAVE TO BE A HIGHLY ACCOMPLISHED ARCHER TO ENTER TOURNAMENTS.** I would go further and state that the quickest way to improve your archery is to enter tournaments. Tournaments are a very nice social day out. You will meet lots of people (mainly nice people), enjoy your archery more and learn as you go. Tournaments are really inexpensive, £7 -£10 entry, a packed lunch and petrol. Refreshments are always provided at reasonable cost and depending on the event some of us at BOM go for a meal afterwards which you can take or leave. You will meet new people and strike up new friendships, see what others are doing, what other people are using and hear advice and help from a lot of good archers. I must stress it is a really enjoyable scene to get involved in and you can do as many or as few tournaments as your circumstances, time and pocket can accommodate. I have already mentioned that you will learn from watching and listening to others, but an unseen advantage is that you will also improve by having a yardstick to judge yourself by. Firstly you will always have your own personal best to try to beat and you will also have others to judge yourself against.

This neatly brings me onto the question oft heard 'am I good enough for tournaments'? **OF COURSE YOU ARE.** Why, simply because the only person judging you will be yourself. Everyone else at a tournament will be positively encouraging and trying to help you, tournaments really are that friendly, and truthfully the only person who will care where you come will be yourself. Just suppose you come last at your first tournament, somebody has to and now you have your first goal. Your first goal will be to beat your previous score and then maybe to finish in the last but one position.

### How to get started

You firstly need to plan your diary. There are many different ways to find out what tournaments are coming up and when.

By being a member of Archery GB (which you already are as a member of BOM) you will receive a quarterly magazine called Archery UK. At the back is an up to date calendar covering all the tournaments all over the country. This might be a bit slow to trawl through and can be confusing at times.

You can also use this link to check out the county clubs that organise tournaments and from each club when they hold theirs. <http://www.glosarchery.co.uk/pages/tournaments.html> . In your first season you will find plenty here to enter.

Finally, talk to other members who regularly attend tournaments. In our club we have a healthy group who regularly enter tournaments and they will **ALL** be only too happy to help.

Your next decision will be 'what round to shoot'. Take for example Cheltenham Archers Summer Rose shoot (have a look at their site). They have rounds York, Hereford, National, and Bristol I to V. I believe Peter is putting together an accompanying article to this explaining the rounds and records. However from our example of the Cheltenham shoot, a York is 12 dozen arrows starting at 100 yards. A Hereford is 12 dozen arrows starting at 80 yards and a National is 6 dozen arrows starting at 60 yards (all reducing in distance as the shoot goes on). By nature of the length of each shoot the National is normally after lunch while the York and Hereford are both sides of lunch. I will often recommend a National for starting off at tournaments as 6 dozen is enough when you are just getting started and 60 yards is not too difficult. You can soon progress as you improve or find it too easy.

You will need to go to the relevant club website to be able to enter their tournaments. Normally you download their entry form as a PDF file, print it, fill it in and send it off with your cheque or postal order. I recommend the earlier the better. People like me will plan the summer in January and the winter in August and start sending them off 2 months in advance to be sure to get an entry. This is especially important in the winter. You will normally receive an email in the week preceding the event with your target number.

Targets are numbered 1 to 20 or 25 depending on the club and your target number will include a letter 'a', 'b', 'c' or 'd'. So if you are numbered 12 b then you will be shooting at target 12 in the first detail ('a' & 'b'). The shooting line will be marked out and there will be plenty of space for 2 archers and their scopes (not essential), 'a' shoots to the left and 'b' to the right. The second detail will be 'c' & 'd', 'c' to the left and 'd' to the right. At outdoor tournaments each end is 6 arrows, indoor tournaments are normally 3 arrows, but not always. For this article I am not going into each individual round but all our regular tournament archers will advise you, just ask! Each archer will get one end of 6 sighters, before the tournaments gets underway in earnest. Once both details have shot their 6 arrows the judge will blow his whistle 3 peeps and everyone goes forward to collect. Normally these days' sighters will be shot and then collected for each detail, for the tournament proper, both details will shoot before collection. For each target there will be a score sheet on a clip board. The person shooting 'c' is the scorer, however, if you are a complete novice and nervous about scoring then ask the other archers on the target if one of them would mind doing it, someone normally will. I do recommend getting used to scoring as soon as possible, it makes life easier. If you want help at our field on a practise night then ask and we will help.

## **Equipment**

For the more experienced archers we go prepared.

Firstly make sure your bow and arrows are in good shape, there is nothing more disappointing at a tournament than having to withdraw due to equipment failure. So check your equipment, clean it, you'd be surprised at how often a thorough clean will highlight loose screws, cracked limbs or frayed strings. This is good advice for everyone experienced or novice, tournament or field as we all get complacent about our kit.

Next up is the British weather! Unpredictable at best, there is nothing more miserable than to shoot all day in pouring rain without a coat. This is just a quick checklist and certainly not exhaustible. Rainproof coat, sweatshirt, polo shirt, hat, sunglasses, flask of coffee, towel, trousers, shorts etc. You will notice from this list how I have included changes of clothing as the weather can change from a.m. to p.m. Make sure the coat you use does not interfere with the path of your string. Sweatshirts and polo shirts can be purchased through the club with the club logo on, which of course we are proud of. Not allowed are denim jeans or camouflage clothing. Also outlawed are open toed shoes. I have mentioned a flask of coffee. Refreshments are available at all tournaments, however, once the shooting starts you probably won't have time to go and get a coffee. If you are an addict like me and can't last for 4 hours between cups a flask in your equipment is most important.

When you get to your first tournament and walk along the waiting line to find the target you are on, you will be struck by the line of tents. Just about every archer will have one. Some are magnificent palaces in canvas while others like mine are just cheap one man pop ups. If it rains you will be extremely grateful even for a cheap one man pop up. They are not expensive, £60 to £100, maybe less if you shop around. You are looking for a tent taller rather than long as you probably won't be sleeping in it. If it rains you can put your equipment in it to keep it dry, sit in it as a respite from the rain, or shade from the sun. You can eat your lunch in it at half time and change clothes if you need to. Also to go with your tent I recommend a chair to take the wait off your feet, it can be a long day if you are standing from 9 to 5. Obviously in the winter for indoor tournaments, tents and chairs are not required.

I mentioned refreshments being available. Generally this will be basic such as burgers, bacon rolls and hot dogs. There will be coffee and tea and also cake. You might consider taking a packed lunch.

## **Conclusion**

All this might seem daunting when reading but I can assure you it is not in practise. Once you have entered a couple all will become routine from the actual entry to scoring. Start with cheap equipment as you can always upgrade with experience.

**Now get out there and enjoy it.**