



Image: Steve Batey

# Spatial Awareness

Going from field to sports hall can severely limit your practice time – and patience – but **Duncan Busby** has some techniques you can use to ensure it doesn't cramp your style

**G**oing through my calendar after a long and inclement season, I was shocked to realise that the indoor season is almost on us. After my initial thoughts of 'What happened to the summer?' and wondering where I put my big arrows, I started thinking about indoor training.

Over the outdoor season those of us who have regular access to a shooting field can get used to practicing almost every day, making the most of the warm and light evenings. But during the winter months most clubs have limited facilities that may only be able to offer a few hours of shooting a week, meaning that much of the progress you made during the summer can be lost by the time you

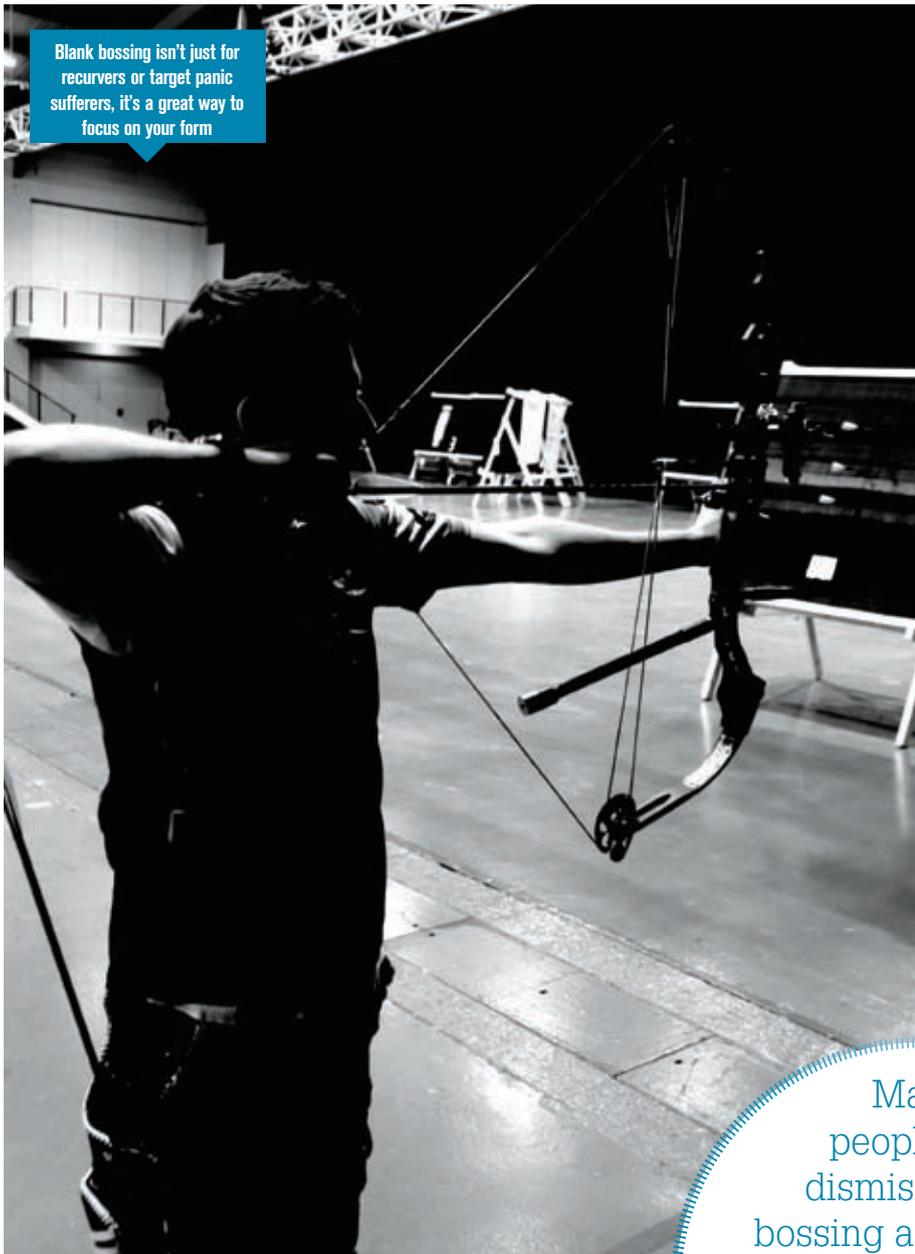
go back outdoors next year. So I started thinking about how to train smart: how do you ensure that you don't lose any of your strength and form that you built up during the summer over the indoor season?

The most obvious difference between the two disciplines is the amount of arrows you shoot during practice. Since indoor sessions are generally limited to around three hours, and some clubs employ a strict shooting arrangement to ensure that every archer gets their turn, you can end up limited to three arrows an end, with only enough time to shoot one round at most. So at around 60 arrows a session, for clubs that meet up to shoot twice a week, this can mean a total of only 120 practice arrows – less than

most outdoor rounds. This can cause you to rapidly lose strength.

The easiest way to increase your output in such a limited time frame would be to shoot more arrows per end, putting up two target faces instead of one so as not to damage your arrows. This can work for archers who have this kind of freedom at their club, but what can you do if you are restricted by numbers and space?

Another option would be to brave the cold and shoot your bow outdoors. I would not recommend you use indoor arrows for this if they are fletched with feathers, since they are likely to shrink in the wintry weather, but any sized arrow, whether you use it in a competition or not, can be useful for keeping up your practice numbers.



Blank bossing isn't just for recurvers or target panic sufferers, it's a great way to focus on your form



Keeping track of your scores on different rounds can be a good way to motivate yourself indoors

Many people will dismiss blank bossing as boring, a recurve training method or only useful for those suffering from target panic, but it can be a lifesaver

The only drawbacks to this will be putting up with the outside temperatures. The cold will affect your performance more than you would imagine; numb fingers are not particularly dexterous and can start to play havoc with your release, and cold muscles put under load are much easier to pull and injure. If this is your only option for getting in practice though, remember to wrap up well – dressing in several thin layers rather than one bulky one can be more insulating, and using a hand warmer between ends can help prevent frost bite.

For those of you who don't fancy braving the cold outdoors, there is a warmer option. Anyone who has access to a garage, shed or indeed any large indoor space can set up a target to shoot blank boss; this can be done at a relatively short distance and can be a great way of keeping your strength up.

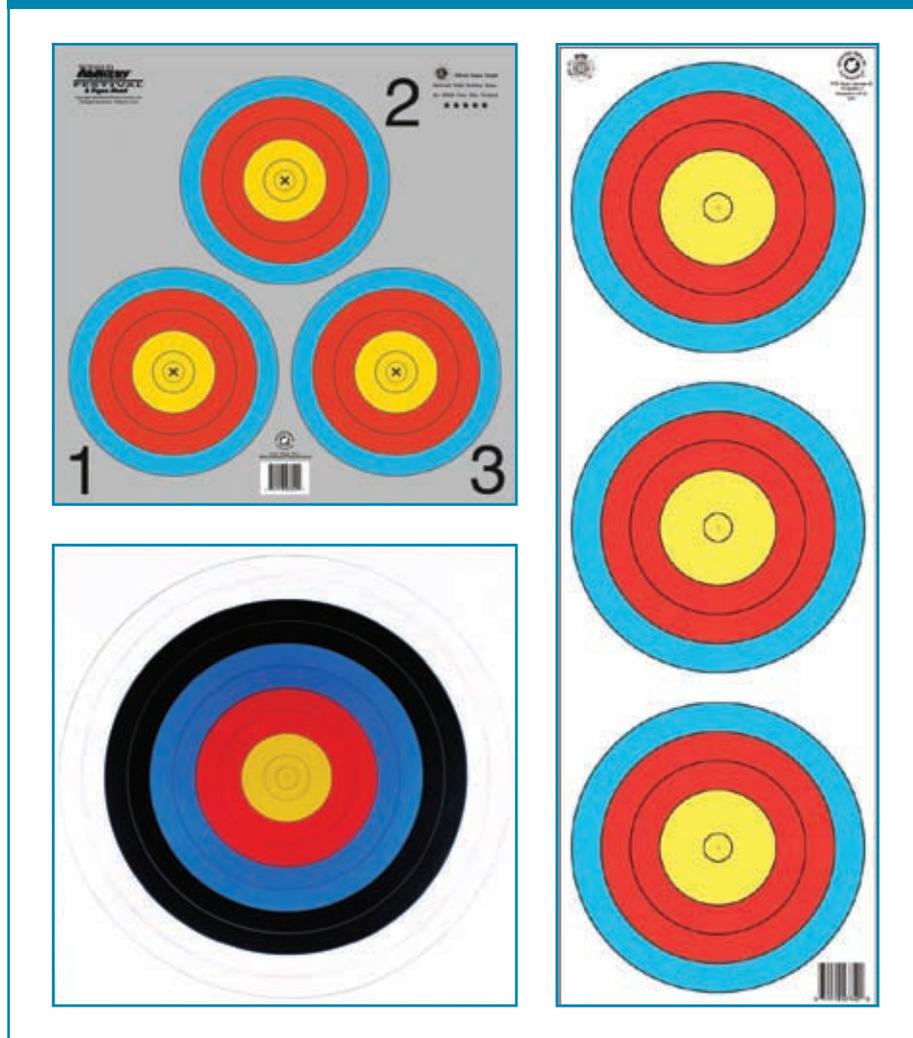
Many people will dismiss it as boring, a recurve training method or only useful for those suffering from target panic, but it can be a lifesaver if you can't get to a range to shoot tournament distances. If your mind needs focal point to aim at, there are a number of programmes available that allow you to print off small target faces to simulate shooting at longer distances. These adjust the size of the face to resemble any distance you choose through your scope, which should enable you to practice your aim as well as keep up your strength and form, but just remember to off-set your sight

so that you won't need to change the face every few ends. You should also make sure that your target is tough enough to withstand your arrows and that your range is safe and secure. Shooting such short distances should allow you to get through quite a few arrows in very little time, so if you are likely to tire of indoor shooting, this is a good way to hold your interest.

Learning to keep your focus indoors can be quite difficult, as there is a lot less stimulation and less variety between rounds since most are shot at 18 metres or 20 yards on similarly sized faces. So even if you find an opportunity to practice, how can you ensure that you remain motivated and your shot remains good?

Indoor shooting is all down to mental discipline and good form; it's the archer that keeps his aim and focus, and executes the same shot consistently, that will score the

## Switch your target faces around to keep the challenge fresh



highest. Look at the world-renowned Vegas round, the target face is the same size as a FITA 18, but the ten zone is scored as the slightly bigger recurve ten. The best compound archers in the world would rarely miss the X in practice, let alone the recurve ten, but put them in one of the biggest, most important tournaments of the indoor season, and watch them drop an arrow or two over the three rounds. Holding your focus and nerve indoors can be one of the hardest things to learn.

The perfectionists among you could try scoring your practice sessions – constantly striving to beat your previous score can be a big incentive to shoot as often as possible and work out where those lost points go. Try a different round, shooting a Portsmouth, a Worcester, a FITA 18, a Vegas round – this can give your mind a little variety and prevent your practice sessions from becoming too much of a routine.

For those of you who aren't that interested in scoring, or for those who just

get plain frustrated, the indoor season is a perfect time to work on your form. There is no interference from the weather – we can't blame a gust of wind for sending the arrow off out of the 10.

Work out a good, consistent shot routine, focus your aim, and pay attention to your release, and you'll be surprised by how much of an influence you have over your shot. So put the indoor season to good use this year, maintain your strength and improve your form.

Make those precious few practice sessions count, by focusing on the aspects of your shooting that can be overlooked or forgotten about when struggling with long distances and weather influences. You may not only inadvertently improve your indoor scores, but you'll be in a better position to begin the outdoor season when it rolls around again next year. However you chose to view this indoor season, remember to enjoy your shooting, and realise it'll be all change again come next March! ☺