



Overcoming problems

A tournament line-up is usually where problems are first identified

through training

Sometimes archery isn't all plain sailing, so **Duncan Busby** outlines the methods he uses to get back on track if you're starting to struggle

Now that the outdoor season is well underway, most of us will have hopefully gained results we are happy with, though possibly results that have frustrated us (because, let's face it, we cannot perform our best all the time). But how you react to your bad results will determine how you will practise and, ultimately, how you will perform in future.

Whether you are a tournament archer or simply enjoy a local, social shoot now and again, you will naturally want to see some improvement with practice. However, if your results have fallen far short of expectation, there are a couple of traps you can fall into: you may be tempted to either shoot less, or alternatively to over-train to compensate.

Whether your attitude is one of despondency or sheer determination, you must still be constructive in practice. Dramatically reducing or increasing your

arrow numbers alone will not help you fix problems with your shooting, on the contrary, it can be damaging. For anyone that is having, or has had, difficulty in working through archery issues, this is how I train smart when things are not going as well I'd like.

For equipment-based problems I'd recommend visiting a competent bow shop or coach who can help you effectively set-up and tune your equipment. If it is purely a tuning issue, you'll be amazed at the immediate improvement sorting it out can make to your results. Problems created by you will be more complicated though, and will take longer to solve, so have patience.

Issues with form and release

Most problems with your shot or form can be resolved with blank boss shooting. By using a target at a fairly close distance with no face you can focus on your shot without the

added complication of aiming. This should allow you to get an idea of what a good, clean, easy release feels like, as well as the effect your form is having on your results.

Blank boss shooting is perfect for building up your strength because you can get through far more arrows than you usually would in a normal practice session, especially if you get into a good rhythm. It is also a good aid for getting through a bout of target panic. If you are hanging up on your release in high pressure situations, or you simply cannot get the arrow away when you are over the middle of the target, a blank boss will help you to relax and focus on your shot routine; just let your release flow and happen naturally, as there's nothing worse than trying to shoot while tense. Remember there is no pressure to hit the gold or achieve a certain score here.

I would also recommend limiting the amount of arrows you shoot. Excessive

Technique

Aiming relies on a complex feedback process, so don't over-analyse and complicate your shot



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numbers will do you no good at all if you're really struggling. I'd advise to stick to around a hundred or so arrows at a time and make sure you feel good about your shots; getting positive feedback is vital to getting your confidence back.

Issues with focus and mental strength

Time away from your shooting can be vital if you are having issues with your head. Sometimes a short break will give you the mental space to put things into perspective, as well as restore your motivation and enthusiasm for the sport, which can make working through any problems a much more positive experience.

It is easy to become overwhelmed by your desire to succeed in one area, so even changing your discipline for a short time can be enough to relieve the pressure you have put upon yourself. Switching between field, target, clout or even archery clay pigeon can remind you of why you took up the sport

in the first place; it's important you don't see shooting as a chore, because after all, archery is supposed to be enjoyable.

Aiming issues

Aiming is a complex process that makes use of visual and physical feedback as well as experience, so it's always best not to over-analyse. It should be as unconscious as possible, as over-concentrating your aim over the middle of the target will only cause your sight to move more and your release to slow down. Focus on a good technique and a relaxed aim, and remember the sight is bound to move about on the target so don't try to correct this consciously. With practice, your sight will stay more or less where you

want it to be, your subconscious will take over, and your groups will appear.

With experience you will become more skilled at predicting the movement of the sight and the feel of the shot. By putting effort into the parts of your shot that you should be controlling, such as your form and release, the process of aiming should take care of itself, no matter what the conditions.

Confidence in your own skill and trust in your technique will make the biggest difference to an accurate and consistent aim. To work on this, once you are happy to shoot on a target face, begin at a distance you do well at. Try not to keep track of what you score, just concentrate on well-executed, relaxed shots and whatever the outcome make sure you take something positive from the session.

After you've built up confidence, move on to more challenging distances. Remember, whenever you are finding aiming becoming difficult, to change your sight picture; a different face and distance can make all

the difference if you find yourself becoming over-focused on one particular target. Even professional archers need to enjoy their sport, and if the fun has gone out of your shooting, every training session and tournament you do will seem like a punishment. Sometimes it's important to get back to basics and enjoy the feeling of making a good shot, though this can be difficult if you are having issues. The most important thing to remember is that there is a solution to every problem, so don't

fixate and put excessive and unnecessary pressure on yourself. Approach the problem logically and patiently. Whether you are shooting on a target face or not, or at a distance of 10 metres or 90 metres, your game is forever changing and no setback will last forever. Enjoy every good shot you make, because in the end, although archery is about the pursuit of perfection, its also about having fun. Good shooting!©
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Mental strength can often be compromised by pressure

