Tricky conditions can cause your scores to take a tumble, but as Duncan Busby explains, perfect weather can also have a surprising effect on your scoring.

We all know that adverse weather can have a huge impact on our shooting, but have you ever found that when you’ve shot in seemingly perfect conditions you’ve still scored significantly lower than you expected? I’d guess that most of us, at one time or another, have been left feeling rather confused when this has happened; but what causes this unexpected dip in performance, and how do you ensure that you’ll hit the scores you’d expect in perfect weather?

Although not every archer will have suffered this, from my own experience – and that of the many archers I have met over the years – I have noticed a ‘perfect weather slump’ at every level of competition.

The expectation for high scores is never higher than at an international competition attended by the best in the world. I have heard the prediction that ‘someone is going to break a world record today’ many times, only to find that the scores are considerably lower than expected despite the weather being sunny and calm. So, why does this happen?

**Over-aiming**

Expectation can play a significant role in the results we achieve. When the conditions aren’t perfect we will most likely try a little harder, but when you combine your desire to shoot a high score with calm weather you can start to over-aim.

If there is no wind you should be able to aim more steadily, but if your focus is distracted by your desire to keep your sight as still as possible your shot process can break down, because as soon as you execute your release some movement will occur. You will create tension in your shot as you try to counteract these effects, and this will lead to a weaker execution and a poor follow through, and any deviation from your normal shot process will produce different results.

Even in calm weather your sight will float around the middle of the target. Remember...
this, and remember to trust your aim and release. The arrow will find its way to the 10 without you having to lock up.

**Frustration**

If your expectations are high you can get frustrated when you start dropping points, especially if you consider them to be because of stupid mistakes you wouldn’t normally make. This can make you want to try even harder, which will inevitably add to the problems you are already having.

This destructive thought pattern will usually persist until you finally give up on a high score and start to fall back into your normal shooting rhythm; this is when you tend to start scoring better.

There is no easy solution to this mind set, but you must remember to follow your usual shot process. Well-timed and consistently executed shots will stand a much better chance of hitting the middle than ones which are over-aimed and tense.

Remember not to heap on the pressure, and don’t become over-involved in the score. When the weather is perfect you might as well enjoy it, so find a good distraction.

**Lack of practice**

You can only perform well if you have been practising, but if the weather leading up to the competition has been particularly bad, you may not have been able to train as much as you would have liked to. You may also find your form has deteriorated after shooting in adverse conditions.

Only time and good weather will allow you to overcome both these issues. By taking advantage of the perfect conditions you should have more opportunity to practise, and in doing so you should also find your form returning, but you will need to be patient. A personal best won’t appear overnight after shooting in the wind and rain for weeks, no matter how perfect the weather is on the day.

**The weather is too perfect**

There is such a thing as the weather being too perfect for archery: bright sunlight can
cause no end of frustration in competitions, particularly first thing in the morning when the sun is low in the sky. Glare on your lens and peep sight can obscure your view of the target, making it difficult for you to aim, or see your sight level. Your best bet for avoiding this is to wear a cap to protect your eyes and, if possible, to fit a sun shield to your scope.

Good weather can also be quite deceptive. At a recent tournament, where conditions seemed to be perfect, no one could understand why the scores weren't higher until somebody remarked that if we had shot in the same wind on a cold, rainy day we would be complaining about it, but as it was hot and sunny no one had noticed – we were just happy to be shooting on such a nice day. Remember the breeze that is keeping you cool is also the one moving your arrows, so don't underestimate how much of an effect it will have.

Heat is another obstacle to the archer. It will make you tired and you will tend to sweat more, so if you don't keep up your fluid levels your concentration and your strength will both be affected. Make sure you keep out of the sun between ends if you can, eat regularly and keep drinking. Even the best among us will struggle to perform under these conditions, so don't expect to achieve any record-breaking scores on the hottest day of the year.

We all expect a dip in our scores in adverse conditions, but it can be just as easy to forget that the hot summer weather can affect us too. So next time you are at a shoot and the conditions are perfect, don't pile on the pressure. Relax and enjoy the day, because even ideal conditions can give unexpected results.

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