TALENT IS OFTEN JUDGED BY THE END RESULT, BUT THAT CAN SOMETIMES MEAN OVERLOOKING THE PROCESS

ARCHERY TALENT INNATE OR LEARNT?

DUNCAN BUSBY BREAKS DOWN THE MYTH THAT NATURAL TALENT MAKES A CHAMPION, AND EXPLAINS WHAT REALLY PUTS PEOPLE ON PODIUMS

Great archers are frequently described as having 'a natural talent' for the sport even when they have spent years working hard to achieve success, while those that struggle with their scores can believe they are being held back by their lack of innate ability. So how do you become a champion? Is hard work and perseverance enough to carry you to victory, or do you need to possess a gift for archery first?

Of course natural talent exists; the likes of Mozart, Michelangelo and Einstein demonstrate this, however, the verdict of someone being a natural talent is judged by the end result. We tend to forget the process and the hard work it has taken to get there

Remembering back to when I first started archery I noticed that some progressed through the beginners' course much faster than others but, like riding a bike or playing a musical instrument, archery comprises a series of skills which must be learnt. We are not born with this knowledge – we attain it through practice – only some pick it up faster than others.

Acquiring upper body strength to draw the bow, hand/eye co-ordination to aim and spatial awareness to execute the shot will only get you so far. Mastering these basic requirements will not determine your success in the sport; you must develop your technique and shooting form to improve your game and this can only be achieved through hard work.

Archery is said to be a sport for all, unlike say, boxing or basketball, archery has no necessity for its competitors to be of a particular physicality. Michael Jordan can

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be said to be a 'natural' in his field; he worked hard at his sport for years but he was no doubt helped by his build. Archery, though, is one of the few sports that is wholly inclusive and allows anyone to achieve greatness.

Matt Stutzman, the American Paralympic archer, has achieved incredible results, though born without arms he holds the world record for the longest accurate shot in archery and regularly competes against able-bodied archers, often outclassing them. Great athletes like this possess a form of natural talent that is not often recognised – determination; it's not something everyone is capable of but being able to work hard towards a goal, consistently, and despite difficulty, is a gift.

Talent and hard work are often talked about in opposition to each other, but the two are not mutually exclusive; talent can only carry you so far, the rest is hard work. Though it's easy to judge talent by a score or a podium placing because it's more conceivable, you must remember that you are a success when you have achieved your own potential, not someone else's.

Childhood stories such as the tortoise and the hare teach us that determination and perseverance is more rewarding that relying on any natural ability alone to carry us through. When I first took up archery I remember I would be out practicing as much as possible, and I spent almost all of my free time shooting my bow. Though this is a fairly normal behaviour when starting out, I found that my enthusiasm had a positive effect on my results, and though I still had to learn things I had no previous knowledge of, such as shooting form and equipment tuning, I found that my passion for the sport encouraged me to work hard to improve and achieve goals I once thought unobtainable.

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Passion makes us strive for excellence: Talent + Hard Work + Passion = Winning formula for success.

The misperception that you need natural talent is purely convenient; it relieves you of the need to improve yourself through hard work – if you can achieve only through natural talent then there is no point in trying. Conversely, that some archers are naturally talented does not mean that they would not be even greater with more practice and effort.

GREAT ATHLETES DO POSSESS A NATURAL TALENT: DETERMINATION

No one is born with every skill set they need to be successful in archery; the act of shooting a bow is an entirely learned process, and though some may have natural aptitude for the particular skills required by the sport this is not enough to guarantee success.

So those archers who feel they lack the natural talent identified in world class shooters should have hope, it may take more time and more effort, but with the right instruction everyone can achieve their own success.

So if you ever feel that you are making little progress in your shooting or that you're not achieving your full potential, remember why you chose to take up archery in the first place. Find your enthusiasm and passion for the sport again because only through your own determination and hard work will you find your natural talent in there somewhere, whatever it may be, and it is this that will carry you to greatness.

NO-ONE IS BORN WITH THE ABILITY TO SHOOT A BOW; SOME MAY LEARN FASTER THAN OTHERS, BUT HARD WORK IS ULMATELY WHAT WILL MAKE THE DIFFERENCE

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