WHAT KIND OF ARCHER ARE YOU?

DUNCAN BUSBY EXPLORES THE DIFFERENT APPROACHES TO COMPOUND ARCHERY TO HELP YOU DISCOVER WHETHER YOU ARE AN INSTINCTUAL OR TECHNICAL ARCHER

'TECHNICAL' ARCHERS PUT A LOT OF THOUGHT INTO THEIR BOW, AND OFTEN SPEND TIME EXPERIMENTING WITH NEW PRODUCTS

'Instinctive' as a style of shooting means many things to different people, but there are very few 'born to shoot' archers that can be considered purely intuitive. For the rest of us, our instincts must be used alongside the technical knowledge and experience we pick up over the course of our shooting lives.

Whether you have more confidence in your intuition or in your equipment, your approach can have an enormous effect on your results. As compound archery gets ever more technical it becomes more important to understand the science behind it all, but it's all too easy to be swallowed up by the physics and forget about the archer behind the bow; so to become a better compound archer should you approach your shooting using logic or emotion?

Firstly, you need to consider what kind of archer you are:

025-027 Duncan Busby Types of Archer_REV3.indd 25 12/03/2015 09:00

A MORE 'INSTINCTUAL' ARCHER WILL HAVE THEMSELVES AND THEIR OWN SHOT PROCESS AS THEIR FOCUS

THE BEST SET UP BOW IN THE WORLD WON'T GET THE RESULTS ON ITS OWN – YOU NEED TO PAY EQUAL ATTENTION TO YOUR SHOT PROCESS

TECHNICAL

The technical archer will always be adjusting their equipment to find a few more points, constantly looking for that 'magic' setup that will reward their successes and forgive their errors – if you feel the constant temptation of new and elaborate products designed to improve your scores, or you become more concerned with how your bow is set up rather than how you are using it, then you fall into this category.

Compound archers have more buying temptation to resist than any other discipline, but your focus on your equipment may cause both your scores and bank balance to suffer. Though it's important to try different things in order to find out what will work best for you, you cannot be blinded to your own involvement in the shooting process. As a technical archer you can be hampered by your preference for deciphering the science behind your shot, analysing your equipment or finding a technical explanation for your results, but how you feel and react when you shoot will play a far larger role in your results than your ability to scrutinise and afford new equipment.

INSTINCTUAL

The instinctual archer will rely on their astute reactions to further their progress; their own good judgement and personal observations can set them apart from other archers and give them an edge in tricky shooting conditions – if you're more in tune with how it feels to shoot and less concerned with how your equipment is performing then you fall into this category.

You are happy to use the latest products and your equipment is well-tuned but it largely stays the same throughout the season, instead your focus will centre on your aim, form and technique.

As an 'instinctual' shooter you will usually make quicker progress than a more technical archer as you'll be less likely to blame your equipment when things don't go well. Instead you'll recognise your own influence over the arrow and seek to improve yourself first.

But your focus can equally punish you when a simple equipment failure is ignored; the products you use can make a difference to your score, so when their effect is not addressed your results won't always be anticipated. Pressure situations can also be difficult if you are affected by your emotions too much; once your concentration is broken by nerves your judgement, which you rely so heavily on, can become clouded and misleading.

FINDING A BALANCE

As a beginner, one of the first things I was told was to concentrate on my form and not on my equipment. It was learning what a good shot felt like, so I could repeat it, that allowed me to advance my shooting. On the other hand, I wouldn't have been able to achieve what I have with poor and badly set-up equipment. So how do you achieve the correct balance between 'technical' and 'instinctual' archery?

The easiest way is to compartmentalise your season's training; if you tend to get caught up in the mechanics of your shooting, set aside only a short space of time to work on your equipment then spend the rest of your practice hours focusing on your technique and getting a feel for your shot. By developing your instincts as a shooter you are more likely to be able to control your shot and predict your results, and once your judgement improves so will your confidence in your ability. After all, you will find it hard to feel completely comfortable with your bow if you are constantly making changes. Though small adjustments need to be made occasionally to accommodate such things as string stretch or a new set of arrows, they should only take a short time and focus should return to the archer as soon as possible.

REMEMBER, EVERY ARCHER IS DIFFERENT AND WE EACH ACHIEVE SUCCESS IN OUR OWN WAY

I find that spending the last few weeks of the indoor season working on my shooting form helps me to start again outdoors with a

025-027 Duncan Busby Types of Archer_REV3.indd 26 12/03/2015 09:00

strong, consistent technique; this makes it easier for me to concentrate on my equipment setup and gives me the confidence that my technique will not hinder my results in any way. Once my bow is shooting well I will rarely make any major changes for the rest of the season.

Alternately, if you are overly concerned with how your shooting feels and you struggle to get comfortable in your shot, shift your focus away from the target. Spend a few hours shooting at a blank boss and distract your mind with some music or good company. The pressure to hit a particular score or improve your technique can be damaging to your results and I find that once I have stopped worrying about where my arrows are hitting it doesn't take long to find a good shooting rhythm again, even if this means identifying a problem with my equipment and making a few changes if necessary. Once you are comfortable with your shot again resume aiming, but continue to focus on that natural shooting instinct you've developed.

Remember, every archer is different and we each achieve success in our own way. Although most pro-archers have expensive setups, they can have different attitudes towards their equipment; some focus on it entirely and rely on their kit to produce the results they want, others simply use these tools as a foundation and focus on their form and technique instead.

You don't need to completely change your relationship with archery, but a modern compound bow can complicate the natural shooting process if you let it. A simple and repeatable shot routine and regular practice, using well set-up equipment, is the key to long-term and consistent success.

So find a balance between the mechanics of the sport and the psychology of the archer, as only then you can ensure you're getting the best out of both yourself and your equipment.

DEVELOPING YOUR INSTINCTS AS A SHOOTER WILL HELP YOU LEARN TO CONTROL YOUR SHOT AND PREDICT YOUR RESULTS

025-027 Duncan Busby Types of Archer_REV3.indd 27 12/03/2015 09:00