

## Archery – Level 4

### **Ways to improve your archery.**

#### **Number Ten: Good archers know when to coach, know when to train, and know when to shoot.**

An Olympic coach once said 'when you shoot, you shouldn't coach'. It's easy to coach and instruct, many of us do it unconsciously. However, when you're trying to do something well, especially at a high sporting level, you should really just focus on the doing. All you should be focusing on is on your form and your archery. When you engage in archery, all you should do is shoot your arrows into the target.

#### **Number Nine: Archery can be fun!!!**

Getting uptight? Want to do better? Sighing a lot? Did you just shoot a lousy shot? If you can't get over mistakes, the next arrow is going to be another one. If you can't adopt the right attitude when you're doing archery, how do you think you can be shooting at top form? Everyone else around you is totally positive. You think you can do it being negative? Ease up and have a good time! Relaxing and 'getting over it' will help you prepare yourself for the next shot. Everyone makes mistakes, professionals however, learn from them and try not to do it again. They do this by: regrouping, relaxing, NOT TRYING TOO HARD, and returning to their form.

#### **Number Eight: Achieve balance for proper follow through.**

I was always told to push using your bow arm. Push it directly towards the target. Push that shoulder down! What he means is that people usually forget that the bow arm needs to counter the pulling arm. Everyone is focusing on pulling the string back and forgetting that you need to have a similar tension on the other arm or the forces on your skeletal structure will not be equal. Without the proper balance, when you release that shot, you jerk and you flinch. What you need to do is achieve balance by working both your pulling and pushing arms. Understand the forces at work on the fulcrum (your shoulders). Understand that without balance, additional forces will show themselves when you release that string. If you're doing it right, the bow falls toward the target and the drawing fingers slide across your neck EFFORTLESSLY. Don't hurry or hasten this process. Don't linger to achieve it either. It comes when everything falls in place and follows a natural rhythm.

#### **Number Seven: Work on strong mental visualization.**

All high level national athletes engage in mental visualization. No one who doesn't visualize will be able to achieve the highest standard. Visualization starts with the decision to do whatever it takes to reach your outcome. You then use tools to recreate a mental space for top performance. This helps to ground your performance to the form you have set out for yourself.

**Number Six: Know when to call it a day.**

Your bow is a high performance machine. You are not. It's better to know when to call it a day when you've had enough. When your muscles flag, when you're distractable, when you're grumpy or hungry. Stop shooting! Practice is only good if you're practicing with good form, and able to replicate the exact form again and again.

**Number Five: Shoot and die. Don't shoot ... also die.**

This is a martial arts philosophy, and is similar to the idea of 'burning your bridges'. When you're shooting, you should perform as though you were in a life and death situation. Not so much to increase your anxiety level but to engage yourself by fully committing the shot to the target. If you're really serious about archery, why shouldn't that seriousness translate to full dedication to each shot? 'Shoot and die' means to focus yourself at that moment at the exclusion of everything else. 'Don't shoot ... also die' means that if you don't perform to your fullest ability, you might as well just give up now.

**Number Four: Focus on your own archery.**

Archery is about preparation. It is about helping you achieve what you need for the best performance. Getting distracted will not help you. Caring for others will not help anyone. Is your equipment in order? Have you checked the straightness of all your arrows? Do you know exactly what is in your case? Any spares? You basically owe it to yourself to manage everything pertinent to YOUR archery.

**Number Three: Bring your archery training to your competition and your competition into your training.**

Your training should be set up so that you can perform well at competitions. Prepare for all competitive environments. Use visualization to help prepare you for the competitive arena. Use all your archery gear (even your spares). When you get to your competition, you should compete with the mindset you have trained for. I believe this 'normalizes' a person emotionally so that you can replicate technique under adverse situations. Archers should be aware of such anxiety and compartmentalize themselves to help ensure proper form and mindset are achieved.

**Number Two: Decide to win.**

That should be the only thing driving you. I read somewhere about how the shot is influenced by the stakes. Shoot for nothing, and you shoot properly. Introduce money into the game, and you're shooting for small change. Put a million dollars and then you're clamping your mind around that dollar figure. No. When you shoot, you should just shoot to win. You should decide that you can win! It doesn't matter if you have just been placed last and have lost. Your attitude must be a winning attitude. Like I mentioned before, all the other archers are dying to win. They want to be number one. If you don't have that hunger, what chance do you have? Don't aim for second place. Go for the top spot. Believe in yourself!

**Number One: There is no big secret to archery. There is no killer app.**

Don't obsess about any one thing. There is no one secret to great archery: it is a combination of everything. Good equipment. Good training. Good coaching. Good mindset. Good conditions. Talk to good archers. You'll find they'll tell you different things. Why? What works for them, may not work for you. You need to figure out how best to put it together for you. That's part of the fun.