



3D Archery

A SPORT FOR ALL AGES

by **Stacey Phetteplace**

The group of archers followed the forest trail until they spotted the brown bear. The most experienced archer drew her bow while they were 48 yards away and released her arrow. Her husband, the next most experienced archer, moved in closer, to 41 yards, and also shot the beast. The last two archers, just 12 and 10 years old, were able to move up to less than 20 yards and make their best shots. The archers all celebrated their successful shots as they approached their three-dimensional foam brown bear target to score their arrows. Then they continued their walk through the woods to the next target.



This scenario is a typical one for those who enjoy shooting 3D archery, a format of archery in which targets are three-dimensional foam targets that generally resemble animals that are commonly hunted all over the world. Most 3D targets are true-to-size. North American animals typically represented are whitetail deer, mule deer, antelope, javelinas, pigs, bears, alligators, coyotes and wolves. There are also animals from other continents, including chamois, African lions, hyenas, caribou, poison frogs, impalas, tapir, tigers, etc. A person could “hunt the world over” without leaving the range. Many archers start as bowhunters who want to enjoy shooting their bows during the non-hunting season, or simply want to be better prepared when the time comes to make that one shot count. As they become more involved in the target side of archery, other family members and friends join in, and lifelong friendships are

made. As bowhunters develop their skills, some experience target archery and a new passion is born. People of all ages can enjoy target archery and many are introduced to tournaments through local archery clubs.

Tournament classes are based on age, gender, skill level, and type of equipment. A large tournament could have as many as 52 classes. Archer ages can be as young as 6 or as old as 90 and beyond. Equipment ranges from traditional ‘stick-and-string’ with no sights, to hunting bows with fixed (immobile) sights, to “open” target bows with adjustable scopes and long stabilizers. Even crossbows have a place in 3D archery. The best part of this sport is that everyone helps each other and cheer when friends are doing well, regardless of how they themselves are performing.

Targets are placed in the woods, with one target down a pathway, known as a lane. A tournament may have 20-30 targets, so there could be up to 30 lanes. A group of 3-6 archers will participate together. Many times, a family will shoot with each other, but sometimes the ladies want to leave the men in order to have their own group. Kids accompany adults and have a lot of fun as well. Many times, it is the kids that get the parents into shooting archery.

What makes 3D even more challenging is that the scoring rings are impressed into the foam but are not marked or clearly visible from a distance. The archer must “see” the rings in their mind’s eye, so binoculars are a must to check the target before drawing your bow. The targets have scoring rings on both sides, and one side or the other is shot at during a tournament.

There are three sanctioning bodies of 3D archery and each has their own placement of scoring rings. International Bowhunters Association, IBO, was started in 1972 and

is the oldest. Their scoring rings have a small center ring, known as the 11 ring, and a bigger ring around it, which is worth 10 points, and an even larger ring surrounds the 10 ring, which is called the 8 ring. Arrows must be touching the ring line or inside of it to get the higher score. If the arrow is in the target but outside the 8 ring, the score is worth 5 points. A missed target is counted as a zero.

In Texas and most of the country, the most popular style of 3D archery is Archery Shooters Association, commonly known as ASA, which was started in 1993 by Wayne Pearson. The scoring rings are similar to those in IBO, however, instead of a center ring being worth 11 points, there are two smaller rings, placed inside the 10 ring and located on the top and bottom edges of the 10 ring, and they are worth 12 points. Only one counts for score though, and the archer must “call” the upper 12 for that ring to count; otherwise, the lower ring is the 12 and the upper ring counts as 10 points. The scoring rings sizes for both IBO and ASA are the same, so it is common for targets to have both 12 rings and the 11 ring in the center. It should be noted that the scoring rings in IBO and ASA are not usually placed where a hunter should aim on a live animal. This is how 3D deviates from a hunting simulation. IBO and ASA are a form of target archery and usually have cash payouts to class winners. Bigger competitions may also give buckles to class winners. ASA and IBO have evolved into true target sports, and numerous archers have reached the professional athlete level of competition, earning a living with high payouts, performance contracts, sponsorships, and fan clubs.

The third style of 3D archery is known as T.H.E. Deerman. T.H.E. stands for “True Hunting Experience” and in this style, the scoring rings represent the actual heart, lung, and liver placement of a real animal. Targets

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are placed at angles, behind limbs and brush, and may require the archer to kneel or sit on the ground to make the shot. If the vital organs are missed, the archer loses five points! Therefore, a good strategy in this game would be to skip a target that offers a poor shot opportunity. This form of archery is not as well-known but enjoys a grassroots level of support and family fun. It is privately owned by Jimmy Gould in Oklahoma. Mr. Gould uses the events to preach the word of God and each day starts with a short sermon and prayer.

Tyler is fortunate to have its own 3D archery club as well! Tyler Archery Club, located in east Tyler near the Oil Palace, has been at the same location for 25 years. It is situated on 130 acres leased from a locally owned timber trust. The focus of the club has been 3D archery with the goal to provide an outdoor venue for members to practice archery in a safe environment. It is also a volunteer-based, nonprofit club that hosts 3D competitions from January through September. Although only members can enjoy year-round access to the practice ranges, all the club events are open to the general public. The club sets a new competition range every month and with approximately 80 lanes to choose from, shooters have a different experience every time they come. All members pitch in to keep the lanes trimmed and trash picked up, so the woods are as beautiful as they are peaceful. Members who help throughout the year are also eligible for the Member of the Year award in September. In 2022, the club boasted over 94 individual and family memberships representing over 150 people.

The Tyler Archery Club does not rent or

sell equipment but refers people to Griffin Archery Shop in Tyler. The archery shop sells equipment, does maintenance on bows, and helps the club by accepting membership forms and payments. Griffin Archery also offers lessons and rents equipment to beginning archers if needed.

The biggest tournament of the year for the Tyler Archery Club is when it hosts a Texas ASA Federation Qualifier event, which usually draws over 130 shooters over two days of competition for cash prizes and to score well enough to qualify for the State Championship. Once an archer competes and places in the top ten of their class, they are "qualified" for the State Championship, which is always held in July, and this year, the Tyler Archery Club was selected to host the State Championship. They are expecting over 350 shooters and their families from

Texas, Oklahoma, Louisiana, and Arkansas to come to Tyler the weekend of July 15-16. The competition starts at 9am and usually finishes around 3pm, and archers will be able to enjoy other activities that the East Texas area has to offer. For this particular tournament, there will be two 30 target ranges set to accommodate the large number of participants.

3D archery has been one of the fastest growing archery sports in the country. It is family focused and gives participants a reason to be in the woods. Even at the highest levels of competition in 3D archery, the focus is on family fun, good sportsmanship, and supporting friendships. We hope to see you, your family, and friends soon walking through our beautiful forest looking for those foam targets.