

The Archer and His (or Her) Bow

Well that's it isn't it? That's what it all boils down to. Two bits of stick, a bit of string and something to aim at. So where did we go wrong? Knobbly bits galore!! Sights (OK an elastic band), rests, long rods, short rods, v-bars, buttons, clickers and doinkers. All these things have their own technical specifications and come with a manual the size of the yellow pages. Arrows!! Don't get me started on arrows. Piles, shafts, nocks, Aluminium, carbon, composite, %F.O.C and Fletchings. All this leads us to the nightmare that is called tuning: walkback, paper, Texas or fletchless arrow; Too stiff: too whippy ; button in or button out. Now you know why John has no hair.

So it's two bits of stick and a piece of string is it? "How do you aim?" is the all too common cry from my novices. Good point really when you compare a novice bow with knobbly bows. How do you throw a dart at a dart board? Do you need a ring and pin aperture? Do you need a counterweight hanging out of your back pocket? (not unless you have acquired that beer belly). You look at where you want to go, line up the dart in the general direction and throw it. Hey presto it hits the wall but not too far away from where you were aiming. So aiming is partly instinctive. A sight is not for aiming with it is a guide. Many years ago I could shoot without a clicker but then that dreaded lurgy gold shyness crept in. I could follow that sight all round the target but never, no never into the gold. Not until I got a clicker. With every clicker you get a free coach muttering "Push and pull. Keep the pressure on. Push and Pull." Now I shake so much I can make a pneumatic drill dizzy. Ah, stability, I need a long rod and V-bars.....

So I bought a bit of stick and a bit of string. I had always liked shooting barebow. Aiming at peoples nocks and being generally smug. "How do you aim?" they would ask. "I look at the target. Pull back and let go." I shot with my longbow thinking I'll just point the bow at the target and let go like I always did. Didn't

seem to work so well this time. Hmm maybe there is a technique. Maybe I need to aim. Then I spent months trying to aim. Trying to get that elastic band on the target or on the fly on the wall (never use flies they sometimes crawl). I was taking too long aiming and my rhythm was dying a death. Arrows found the wall, the target leg and the huge area of straw that is not scoring. Back to basics. How do you throw a dart at a dart board? So I started focussing on where I wanted the arrow to go. The elastic band is only a guide, body position is the important factor. Holding the bow for too long as you battle with the sights leads to tension and this breaks your rhythm. Your subconscious moves your body subtly. Spend your energy on focussing on the target and forget the sight it is only a guide to body position.

The next time you are shooting remember all you have is two sticks and a bit of string. All that you need to do is look at the target pull back and let go. Nothing else exists. Every arrow flies to the target.....it's not always the target you had in mind.