

# Archery for the Blind

*I am sure some of you, at one time or another, have thought about how you would do certain things if you were blind. You probably wondered how you would cook a meal. You may have wondered how you would match your clothes. But, it's probably a pretty good bet that you've never wondered how you would shoot archery if you were blind.*

I have accompanied my husband to club shoots and tournaments for the past four years. During that time, he and I had many discussions about how I might be able to shoot archery as a blind person and share in the fun. I searched the internet for any information I could find regarding blind individuals who shoot archery. I could not find anything in the United States, but discovered that it has become quite popular in Europe. I contacted British Blind Sports which forwarded me information regarding their technique.

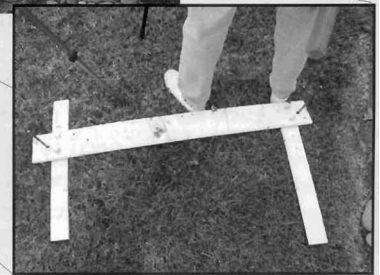
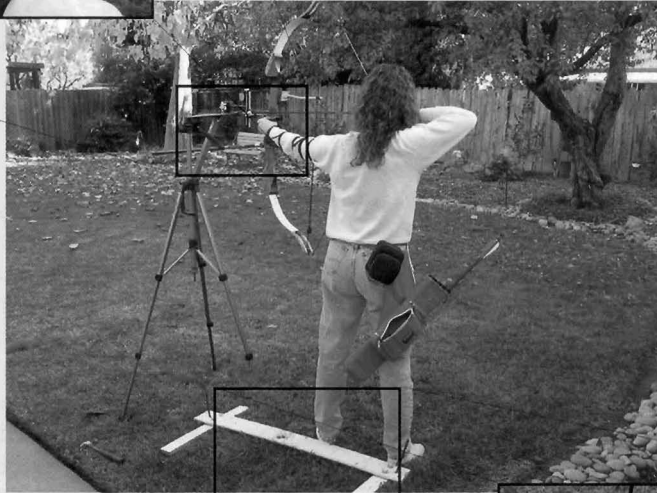
Archers who can see the target use bow sights, but archers who cannot see the target use tactile sighting aides. It has been found that a lack of vision causes alignment and balance issues, resulting in problems with body sway. Because of this, at 60 meters a visually impaired archer can miss the target 4 out of 6 times, but at 30 meters she may miss the target face, but should not miss the target entirely. To deal with this problem, the British Blind Sports development team created what is known as the Burntwood round. The Burntwood round has the archer shooting only at 30 meters and changes the size of the target to simulate the distances. A 40 cm target represents a distance of 90 meters, a 60 cm target represents

a distance of 70 meters, an 80 cm target represents a distance of 50 meters, and a 120 cm target represents a distance of 30 meters. There is no difference in target size shot by male and female archers. The Burntwood FITA round enables visually impaired archers to attend mainstream outdoor competitions. When shooting indoors, a visually impaired archer can shoot the same distance and target size as the sighted archers (40 cm target at 20 meters).

My husband tacks to the ground my foot marker and a tripod which holds my sight. The foot marker allows me to stand in the same place each time I return to the line to shoot. (*Editor's Note:* Foot markers were widely used in target archery by sighted archers in the days of the longbow.) When I pull back the bow, I aim by touching a particular area on the back of my hand to the sight. Otherwise, my technique is the same as any other archer. I have a spotter who tells me the position of my arrow on the target by calling out the color and clock face. For example, 12 o'clock outer red, 3 o'clock inner blue.

As I develop my technique, it is important to me that I am not shooting with any advantage over a sighted archer. I want to be confident that my skills and score are comparable to that of a sighted archer at the same level of experience, even though I am competing as a blind person.

I shot in my first tournament on May 1st at the Cotton Boll Classic in Tulare, CA. I had a lot of fun participating alongside the other archers. The sighted archers and officials made me feel at



home and like part of the group. Three weeks later, I shot at the State Outdoor Championship Tournament in Long Beach, California. It was at that time that the State Archers of California voted to recognize blind archery as an official category at all California events. This was very exciting news and is the first step in gaining recognition on a national level.

I am pleased to be able to be introducing blind archery to the United States and hope that other visually impaired individuals will want to join in the sport. For additional information contact:

**British Blind Sports**

[http://www.britishblindsport.org.uk/archery\\_txt.htm](http://www.britishblindsport.org.uk/archery_txt.htm)

or

**Sandra Nesbitt**

BBS Archery Section Chairperson

phone 0191 4567912

email [stephen.nesbitt1@btinternet.com](mailto:stephen.nesbitt1@btinternet.com)

mobile 0793 1219393

**Janice Walth**

