

How to Shoot One Arrow at a Time and Win

Most top archers can recover from a bad shot and continue to shoot well by just getting back into the groove. Archers pace themselves with their competitors. Although we would like to believe that we can shoot just one shot at a time and not compare it with another shot, no matter how important that particular shot might be, you just cannot shut off your brain. So, you need to fool your brain in order to be able to get past the pressure you apply to yourself.

The Game

Fooling yourself is more of a game than the actual competition. If you can focus on challenging yourself to improve your shot, then sometimes you will forget the pressure that is going on around you. Don't confuse pressure with stress. You want the pressure of the competition because it keeps you more focused, thereby increasing your concentration. Stress is what you apply by the fear of the unknown. Most often, stress is created around items you have very little control over, such as your competitor or the weather. These things generate stress because you want to shoot well, but cannot control these elements, thereby creating the stress or anxiety or demands on yourself. Pressure is what you are seeking. The heightened awareness, the excitement of challenging yourself to do better or at least to maintain your control under competition. How should you be able to shoot a good shot under pressure and stressful situations? By focusing on the shot execution and having faith in your form.

You cannot shoot all 12, 18, 144, or 288 shots at one time. You are just shooting that one arrow in your bow. So focus on how to shoot that particular arrow. Once the shot is made you should learn from it. Use the feedback you get from each shot (feel the shot, look at the shot placement, consider the weather elements) and go from there. Analyzing what you did right and what you did wrong keeps your mind busy, thus keeping you from thinking of the "big" picture. Once you have analyzed a shot, then you figure out what you need to do to correct for the next shot. In other words, you are like a computer compiling all the information you can and then finding a solution to a problem. Plug in the new solution and re-analyze for the next shot. Continue to do this shot after shot. When things are going well, you still need to focus on what is making it go well. Say, for instance, you are thinking about keeping your bow arm up in place before, during, and after the shot. Keeping your mind on this and then feeling and seeing that your bow arm is staying in place will keep your mind busy. If the arrow goes in the center, then you continue to focus on that. But, if you feel something is wrong and the arrow still goes in the center, you need to check it out on the next shot to see what makes the feel a little off. If the arrow does not go to its intended place and the weather was fine, then you need to figure out quickly what you did to cause the arrow to miss the mark. If you shoot enough arrows and record your shots, you will have a better understanding of what causes an arrow to go to a specific place.

For example, if you shoot high shots, you may know that about 80% of your shots will go high if your back elbow is dropping to get through the clicker. Check that on the next shot to see if that is the reason, by focusing on keeping your elbow up. If that is not the reason, then keep going down your list of possible causes until you resolve the problem. Constantly monitoring your form from shot to shot to make sure that everything is functioning properly.

As you can see, you can achieve focusing on one shot at a time, by playing a game with yourself, and focusing on what is making the shots go where they are going. However, your mind will wander and you should expect the competition to cause you to see how you are doing against everyone else. It becomes exceptionally hard when going one-on-one or head-to-head with your competitor.