

Conscious vs.Unconscious Aiming

By Don Morrison

Among professional archery instructors there appear to be two general schools of thought regarding aiming. The two are completely contradictory. One theory is to focus on shot execution - put all of your conscious power on what happens behind you, that is the draw arm scapula goes towards spine and back tension is uninterrupted (constant motion) and let your unconscious mind put the pin on the dot. They believe that if you focus on what you want to hit, your ring will circle the center automatically, thus eliminating the need to aim.

The other one is to practice your shot execution until it becomes fully automatic (3000 shots for an average archer) and therefore it does not need your conscious attention any more and put all your conscious power into aiming.

Obviously, if you are successful with one, that will be one that you support. If you are an extremely analytical person, you may side with the conscious aiming approach. Most people who have been very successful with this method are highly analytical. Opposite from the analyticals are the creative thinkers who want to use the "feel" method while not worrying about aiming, because they will use "the force," so to speak, to aim. This is a more Zen-like approach.

The chosen method may depend on how you handle shooting under the pressure of competition. If you are not consciously aiming you do not worry about your nerves as much as just focusing on executing the shot correctly. This keeps your mind off the aim, as aiming causes even more stress (for this type of archer) because the pin does not stay in the middle of the gold.

As opposed to recurve shooters, compound archers use equipment that allows them to see the X in sharper detail. Their relaxation of their front halves is important because it allows their aim to stay much more consistent . . . unless the wind blows. Thus, you may have noticed in the olympics, American archers suffer when the winds are strong, while Europeans shoot exceptionally well in the winds. This is due to their aiming methods and shot execution. When the winds stop, the Americans excel in the relaxed-aim method.