Archery Fitness – Building Strength

Strength in Archery is not only the muscle power required to draw a bow, but also to maintain balance and stay steady as you aim. How strong you currently are dictates what poundage of bow you can use. A bow that is too strong for you will only do possible damage to your muscles and joints. A light draw weight bow will generally be used for beginners to learn basic skills without the need for strength. As skills are developed, then a stronger draw weight bow may be used and so strengthening of muscles will be required. Some of the above stretching exercises can also be used to strengthen muscles.

The training weight for a person to start with is usually established by finding the maximum load that can be lifted 10 times in repetition. (Usually about 75% of maximum strength). With all exercises, it is best to start with only a few repetitions of each exercise for the first two weeks, then progressively increase the number of repetitions over a period of about 4 weeks, until 8 to 10 repetitions can be achieved. Allow a recovery period between each exercise to avoid fatigue. Most importantly, if a particular exercise is causing pain in the muscles or joints, then reduce the weight and/or the number of repetitions. "No Pain, No Gain" is wrong. When the body feels pain, it is a message to ease off and slow down before you do damage to muscle fibres and tendons.

Specific Movement.

The muscle groups used in archery where strength is required are:

1. the upper back and shoulder muscles to draw the bow,
2. the upper and lower shoulder muscles to control the draw arm,
3. the arm muscles to extend the bow arm,
4. the finger muscles to hold the bowstring.

To strengthen these muscles, the exercise used should closely imitate the movement of shooting a bow. Remember, when strengthening specific muscles, include both right and left hand sides to maintain a balance of muscle strength. Other muscle groups often over-looked in archery are the upper and lower leg muscles to control balance, and the lower back and waist muscles to control a steady stance.