

# ARCHERY – THE BASICS

## THE TRADITION

Archery was once one of life's necessities; now it is one of its joys. Yet tracking the evolution of archery from pre-historic hunting to a 21<sup>st</sup> century Olympic sport is as difficult as keeping your eyes fixed on the flight of an arrow. Along the way, the art of bow and arrow has been used for survival, warfare, conquest, competition and recreation. It stands today as one of the 28 sports of the Summer Olympic Games, a sport enjoyed by millions of participants in 180 affiliated nationals around the world.

## THE HISTORY

Fifty thousand years ago, well before the first ball was bounced, the first goal scored, or even the first running race recorded, our ancestors were practicing archery. Stone arrowheads found in Tunisia in North Africa date the origins of our modern sport back to this era. Behind the control of fire and the wheel, the bow and arrow is regarded as Mankind's "third Invention"

For thousands of years, a hunter's skill with a bow and arrow would mean the difference between life and death for his/her tribe. Later, the fabled archers of military history, from ancient Chinese and Egyptian forces to the feared warriors of Ghengis Khan and the legendary longbow exponents of England in the Middle Ages, shaped and changed world history. Archery was a feature of life, which is why tales of such romantic hero's as William Tell and Robin Hood remain with us after hundreds of years.

Archery as a sport dates back more than 400 years. The first known English archery tournament was held in 1583 at Finsbury, and attracted some 3000 archers. England also boasts the oldest continuously held archery tournament still in existence, the Ancient Scorton Arrow, which was founded in Yorkshire in 1673 and still held today.

## THE OLYMPICS

Archery's modern Olympic history can best be described in two distinct eras. The first era occurred from 1900 – 1920, when it was featured at the Games on four occasions: 1900, 1904, 1908 and 1920. During this time, archery did not have an established set of international rules, hence the events, number of entries and standards of competition varied greatly at the different Games. The era is best remembered for two reasons. First, it was the

only sport for women at the 1904 Olympics in St. Louis, USA (Hence, archery will celebrate 100 years of women's involvement at the Games in Athens). Second, it was during these early Games that Belgium's most decorated Olympian with six gold and four silver medals. He won two of his gold medals at archery's first Games in 1900, then returned to the Olympics 20 years later at age 54 and won his other four gold medals.



**Tim Cuddihy**  
**2001 and 2003 World Junior Champion**

After a 52- year hiatus, archery returned to the Olympic program at Munich in 1972. By this time, it had become a vastly more efficient sport. The International Archery Federation (FITA) had been established in 1931. International rules had been sanctioned, annual (now biannual) world championships were being held, and an international and enthusiastic community of archers had boosted the number of participant's worldwide.

From 1972 – 1984, individual events for men and women were held. In 1988, men and women's team events were added to the program. These four events – men's individual and team, and women's individual and team – have been part of the program ever since. Only recurve bows are used in archery events at the Olympics.

## THE RECORD

- Korea's women are one of the Olympics' great dynasties. Since Korea first competed in archery at the Games in 1984, it has won every woman's gold medal contested. The record stands at none gold medals and counting – an astonishing feat. At Sydney 2000, Korea won the women's' team and swept the three individual women's medals.

- The most successful archer since 1972 is Korea's Kim Soo Nyung. Kim competed at the 1988, 1992 and 2000 Games. Her record stands at four gold medals, silver and a bronze.
- Archery is a great friend of host nations. Spanning back to Moscow 1980, the past six host nations have won archery gold medals. What's more, three of these had never won a gold medal before or since – the Soviet Union, 1980; Spain 1992; and Australia, 2000. Currently, no other sport can boast more than three consecutive gold's for host nations.
- Archery is proud that it was the first sport in which a paraplegic athlete competed at an Olympic Games. New Zealand's Neroli Fairhall placed 35<sup>th</sup> in the women's individual event at the 1984 Olympics in Los Angeles. Paralyzed from the waist down after a traffic accident, she competed while seated in her wheelchair. Another disabled archer. Paola Fantato of Italy competed from a wheelchair in 1996. She placed 54<sup>th</sup>.

## THE WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS

The first World Outdoor Target Championships was held in Lwow, Poland in 1931. The event was held annually from 1931 until 1959 (no championships were held from 1940 –45), when it became a biannual competition.

Other than the Olympic Games, the world championship is archer most esteemed competition. It is open to more competitors than the Olympic Games, with events for both compound and recurve bows. Compound bows are excluded from the Olympic program, therefore a world title is the ultimate prize in the sport with compound and recurve squads needing to be at their best, many observers believe a world championships is the most important test of a nation's overall archery strength.

There are eight events contested at a world outdoor target championships: men's compound individual and team, women's individual and team, men's recurve individual and team, and women's recurve individual and team.

Other than the world outdoors target championships, FITA also conduct world championships in other archery disciplines such as indoor, field and 3D catering for both senior and junior archer.



**CLINT FREEMAN**

Gold Medallist 2003 World Championships  
Men's Compound

## DID YOU KNOW?

### First Stringer

The term 'first stringer' used in sport originated among archers, who saved their best strings for major competitions.

### A Robin Hood

A term used when an archer splits the shaft of an arrow already in the target during competition.

### A Civil Solution

Forbidden to use guns, confederate soldiers used bows and arrows to hunt at the end of the US Civil War, sparking a nation-wide archery revival.

### Horsing Around

The recurve bow used in the Olympic Games descends from a model created by the Assyrians in 1800BC for archers on horseback.

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**Australian Government**  
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