Why Archery

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Overview

I. Features of archery
II. Mental aspects
III. Technical aspects
IV. Personal involvement
I. Archery is primitive and fundamental

- Key activity of early prehistoric civilization. Humans created tools around 2.5 million years ago - but first made bows and arrows 64,000 years ago.
- Good compromise between civilization and primitive instincts.
It is mythological (I)

- Cheiron, the wise and noble centaur and mentor, used archery teaching a lot (Achilles and Hercules were his students)
It is mythological (II)

(Odysseas, back to Ithaca, kills the suitors)

- An analogue: the travels gave Odysseas more than the return to Ithaca itself. Similarly, shooting the bow and the flight of the arrow towards the target is more important than hitting the target or not.
"True archery is purposeless, aimless! The more you try to learn how to shoot the arrow for the sake of hitting the goal, the less you will succeed. What stands in your way is that you have a much too willful will. You think that what you do not do yourself does not happen."
II. Mental aspects

"Developing **deep focus** is extremely important in archery (and life). Staying with the task at hand is difficult for humans and the average person has an attention span of 2-3 seconds only.

When an archer achieves deep concentration, it is a wonderful feeling. It is **almost a meditative state**, and is often referred to as “being in the zone”. Once there the archer can achieve great things."
"Archery is a matter of life and death to the extent that it is a contest of the archer with himself.

Fundamentally, the archer aims not at the target but at himself, thus becoming simultaneously the aimer and the aim, the hitter and the hit".
III. Technical aspects – the bow
A typical target face
Typical competitive target distances

- 18m indoor (60 arrows)
- 30m outdoor (72 arrows)
- 70m outdoor (72 arrows)

Another interesting format: the total field game (TFG). Shooting at various distances (10m up to 50m), along a 3km walk in the woods/mountains.
The 19 parts of a shot

- Stance (legs open, back leg slightly wider than the front one)
- Slight leaning of the body towards the target
- Turning the head towards the target
- Turning the left hand almost horizontally
- Catching the string with the 3 inner fingers
- Pulling the string with a straight right hand
- The grip (the left hand deeply catches the bow)
- Keep left hand fingers loose
- The thumb slightly touches the bow, without pushing it
The 19 parts of a shot (II)

- Raising the bow a little higher than the target height
- Right hand pulls the string and makes a steady contact to the chin
- At the same time, the left hand slightly pushes the bow towards the target
- Aiming (centering the gold ring in the sight)
- Release of the arrow
- Continue keeping left hand horizontal after the arrow is gone
- Right hand follows through back towards the ear
The 3 qualities of executing each part

- Loose/pathetic way (Apollonian)
- Tight/aggressive way (Dionysian)
- The ideal way

- μέτρον ἄριστον ("everything in moderation")
- The middle way (in Buddhism).
Examples of bad execution and their impact

- Example 1: a narrow stance makes you unstable, a wide one makes you too loose and pathetic.

- Example 2: if the thumb touches the bow very tightly, the arrows will go towards the right, but if the touch is too loose the arrows will go left.

- Example 3: if after the release one lowers the left hand quickly the arrows will go downwards, if the release is too tight the arrows will go upwards.
The huge number of possible shots

- (At least) 19 parts
- Each one can be done in (at least) 3 ways

$$3^{19} = 1.162 \text{ billion ways at least!}$$

While only 1 is ideal!
IV. Personal involvement

- I enjoy the lonely practice in a private place next to my house
- Trying to reach deep focus
- Sometimes I even experienced moments of sudden enlightenment and transcendence.
But I also belong to an amazing team: Akadimia Pelopos Patron
Two training sessions weekly, one in Patras and the other one at our Archery Park in the Platanovrysi village.
With our fantastic coach Paul Koulis.
Personal achievements

- 18m record: 504/600 (average arrow: 8.41/10)

- 30m record: 636/720 (average arrow: 8.82/10)

- 70m: coming soon (end of July)
- Total field game in the woods of Pelion mountain (ranked 5th)
- A gold metal at an official, national event.
Thank you for your attention.