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MAKING USE OF THE GNAS TARGET ARCHERY HANDICAP SCHEME

Page 1 of 4

A different Handicap System to the one we have today was in use when we started archery in 1961. It was similar to that used in golf, i.e. plus/par/minus the best archers, of course, having a minus handicap. When a new system, more appropriate to the sport of archery was sought, David Lane created the current GNAS Handicap Scheme. Many years ago, David Lane was invited to give a talk at a Meeting of the Essex Guild of Archery Coaches at Runwell Hospital in Wickford. Anyone who has seen the handicap tables will not fail to appreciate the tremendous amount of work undertaken by David Lane in producing this excellent handicap scheme and tables, which remain his copyright.

In those days it was common for there to be a handicap award for 1st, 2nd or 3rd class archers, at least giving them a chance to be a prize winner and also a feeling of pride in knowing that, for that day, they were the most improved archer. However, over the years, this practice has gradually gone out of fashion and perhaps the explanation for this is the requirement for individual archers to know their current handicap so that the award can be awarded fairly. Archers would declare their current handicap on the entry form, and advise the tournament organiser of any changes on the day of the competition. To overcome the possibility of the wrong handicap being given, some tournament organisers would handicap the archers on the first 2 dozen arrows of the round and the winner would be the archer showing the most improvement over the round. Perhaps the following example of archers shooting in a WESTERN round will illustrate this point quite well, and there is a further example of this on page 4.

Gender	2 doz score	H/C for 2 doz	H/C Allowance	Score for Round	Score + allowance	Position
Lady	134	51	862	553	1415	2nd
Gentleman	158	45	775	639	1414	3rd
Junior (Lady or Gent)	115	55	934	498	1432	1st

Handicaps are, and always have been, a fair means of allowing competition between archers of all standards, which is something worth promoting in a club. We have David Lane to thank for giving us this very useful tool. I take this opportunity to mention that he was awarded a special Plaquette at the GNAS AGM & Conference on 16th April, 2011. Congratulations to him!

At a recent Meeting of the Essex Guild of Archery Coaches the subject was raised about how to maintain an archer's interest in shooting. It was generally agreed that some form of incentive might be needed, particularly for new archers who have recently completed an introduction course. In our experience, Tom and I have found that creating some form of handicap competition within the club works very well, and the GNAS handicap scheme is a very good vehicle to do just that.

We have always tried to encourage clubs to make more use of the handicap scheme which enables the less experienced archers to bond with the more experienced archers giving them a sense of worth in the club.

During our travels around the shoots, Tom and I are occasionally asked about the handicap scheme, and sometimes by parents of junior archers. We thought it might be useful if I write this paper for those who may be interested in having a better understanding of the handicap scheme, perhaps with a view to employing it. The main benefit of using handicaps in the club is that it puts all members on a level basis; enabling members to compete against each other, whether male, female or juniors and shooting any bow style or round. For the purposes of this article, I have confined all the examples to RECURVE archers shooting OUTDOOR rounds. However, it should be noted, that for INDOOR rounds Tables 22 and 23 in the Handicap Tables show separate handicap allowances for “Non Compound Bows” and “Compound Bows”.

Here is one suggestion you might like to consider for a handicap competition in the club. Some clubs might prefer to have one handicap tournament in the year. However, to generate and maintain interest in shooting, an ongoing competition throughout the summer or winter season is preferable. The only downside of this is that it also creates some ongoing work for someone in the club. However, it does not have to be the club’s Records Officer, who already has a great deal of work if the club has a large membership. The club could appoint someone who has the time, interest and inclination to carry out the task of recording and processing the results and who would produce a progress report at the end of each month. It is quite revealing to find how many members jostle to improve their position on the monthly list. At the end of the season the archer at the top of the table will, of course, be proclaimed the winner and, hopefully a small annual trophy could be presented to them.

Once a club has appointed, let’s say a ‘Handicap Competition Officer’ (HCO), he/she needs to obtain the current handicap from the club’s Records Officer for each archer taking part, and this will be the starting point. (The club Records Officer will normally keep records of each of its members; updating their handicaps as they improve). The HCO should then record the scores of the members throughout each month. Look up the handicap number for each round and score in the Tables and identify the appropriate allowance for that handicap number. Add this to the score for the round. You might choose to take the total of the top 4 scores, plus allowances, for each archer for your end of month report. The following is an example of a record sheet for one archer in such a competition.

Name: A. N. Other			Handicap Number at start: 57			Date: 1 st May, 2011		
2011 Date	Round	Venue	Score	H/C for Round	Bow type	Current H/C	Allowance For round	Grand Total
01-May	Junior Warwick	Club	328	59	Recurve	57	1103	1431
05-May	Short Warwick	Club	314	54	Recurve	57	1153	1467
10-May	Junior National	Club	532	53	Recurve	56	937	1469
15-May	Short National	Club	376	60	Recurve	55	998	1374
20-May	National	Club	385	54	Recurve	55	1073	1458
25-May	Western	Club	490	56	Recurve	55	934	1424
30-May	Western	Club	556	53	Recurve	55	934	1490

The HCO would keep such a spreadsheet for each archer taking part in the competition. You can simply use the best score for each archer per month but, if the HCO has the time, he/she could total the best 4 (or any other number) scores in the month for each participating archer and issue the monthly progress report based on this. The advantage of the latter is that if an archer has a poor score one day they have the opportunity to improve their position for another 3 rounds. This is a good way of generating interest and helps to instil a lively competitive spirit in the archers.

If using a total of the best 4 handicap scores per archer for your club’s handicap competition, it can be seen from the above spreadsheet that the best 4 scores (shown in red) are 1490 + 1469 + 1467 + 1458 which total 5884 for the month. Therefore, the leader for the month would be the archer with the highest combined 4 scores. If it was decided to award on the highest single handicap score then the above archer’s score would be 1490.

The rules for implementing the Handicap Scheme are described in pages 1 and 2 of the Target Archery Handicap Scheme and the tables are numbered 5 to 23. You can purchase a copy of the Tables online from the GNAS **shop** visiting www.archerygb.org the current prices for which are £5 for the tables or £8 with a binder. For those archers/parents who are unfamiliar with the Scheme, perhaps the following guidelines will be of some assistance.

To gain an initial GNAS handicap an archer needs to shoot three complete recognised rounds from the list in the GNAS Rules of Shooting (National Handicap Scheme). The handicaps run from 0 to 100.

EXAMPLE:

The handicap for a ladies first class HEREFORD Recurve score of 723 would be 50. The same score shot by a gentleman would still be a 50 handicap but it would only be a second class score. The handicap tables can be used for all scores and all listed rounds whether lady, gentleman or junior. For shooting the same score of 723 with a different bow style the handicap would be the same (50) but the classification would change; for example:

Gender	Compound	Barebow	Longbow
Ladies	3rd	Master Bowman	(See note below)
Gentlemen	Unclassified	1 st Class	(See note below)

Obviously it would be unlikely for a Longbow archer to achieve the score of 723, and in fact the top scores shown in the handicap tables for the Longbow are 447 = handicap 59 for a Lady and 280 = handicap 65 for a Gentleman. As archers would have a different Handicap for each bow style it is important that when notifying the club Records Officer about your scores, you also advise the bow style.

ESTABLISHING AN ARCHER’S INITIAL HANDICAP

The Records Officer records all scores shot to GNAS or FITA rules but handicaps can only be adjusted on FULL rounds shot. For an initial handicap the Records Officer would take the scores for the first three full rounds shot, giving each round score its relevant handicap. The resulting three handicaps would then be totalled together and then divided by three to arrive at the average. The result would be the initial handicap but if this totalled, say 51.3; the handicap would always be rounded UP therefore the initial handicap would be 52. If an archer’s score was smaller than shown in the handicap tables the Records Officer would give that archer a handicap of 100 (which is the lowest in the tables).

Handicaps are ongoing, so when an archer with an initial handicap of 52 shoots a full round and the score gives a handicap of, let’s say, 48, when entering this in the Club’s Record Book the Records Officer would subtract 48 from 52 = 4, and divide by 2 giving a result of 2. Then 2 would be subtracted from 52 = 50. The archer would have improved their handicap by 2 places and 50 becomes the archer’s new handicap.

THE FOLLOWING ARE TWO EXAMPLES FOR ASSESSING AN INITIAL HANDICAP

Rounds shot	EXAMPLE 1		EXAMPLE 2	
	Score for round	handicap	Score for round	handicap
ALBION	435	57	569	51
WESTERN	544	53	445	58
NATIONAL	319	<u>58</u>	336	<u>57</u>
Total the 3 handicaps for each example:		168		166
Each total would be divided by 3 to find the average		Equals 56		Equals 55.333
The initial handicap in both examples would be		56		56

Note: The average of **55.333** in **EXAMPLE 2** would be rounded up and therefore the initial H/C would also be 56

Once an archer has an initial handicap (as shown in the above examples), the archer’s handicap would not be affected if any subsequent round shot had a higher handicap number i.e. 58. However, any round shot giving a lower number i.e. 53; then this would change the archer’s handicap, as follows: Using one of the previous Examples 56 – 53 = 3 divided by 2 = 1.5; therefore 1.5 would be subtracted from 56 = 54.5. This would then be rounded up to 55 and this would be the archer’s new handicap.

Allowances per archer for a WESTERN round handicap competition

Archer 1 has a handicap of 57 which equates to a score of 466 add allowance of 974 = 1440
 Archer 2 has a handicap of 53 which equates to a score of 544 add allowance of 896 = 1440
 Archer 3 has a handicap of 58 which equates to a score of 445 add allowance of 995 = 1440

You can see from the above examples using the Allowances that **1440** is the number all three archers theoretically started with (by the tables).

Details for handicap competition	Archer No. 1	Archer No. 2	Archer No. 3
Current handicap and equivalent score for each archer	466 = 57	544 = 53	445 = 58
Handicap allowances for each handicap number	974	896	995
Score shot for handicap competition by each archer	<u>677</u>	<u>687</u>	<u>657</u>
Totals with handicap allowances added	1651	1583	1652
Actual improvement in score	211	143	212
Placement at end of handicap competition	2nd	3rd	1st

In the above example you will note that although Archer 2 shot the best score of 687 and Archer 1 shot the second best score of 677, it was Archer 3 with the lowest score of 657, who won the handicap competition with the best total score of 1652, having shown the most improvement over the round when the allowances were added for each archer. The advantage of this type of shoot is that all archers start with an even chance of winning, and Competitions such as this give a great deal of encouragement to the less experienced archers in the club.

By being aware of your own handicap you can tell if you are shooting to a higher or lower level than normal in any round. If you do not know your handicap, you have only to ask your club Records Officer for it.

I do appreciate that, in some cases, I am preaching to the converted (to coin a phrase) because many clubs may already be operating a handicap competition. However, for those who are not familiar with how it all works, I do hope this explanation will perhaps give some food for thought.

Good luck, and do have a go at it. You might be surprised just how much interest it generates in your club.