

# Buying a Bow—What Matters?

# Special Feature

*Archers from around the world were asked to list, in order, their criteria for choosing a bow. Their criteria were then ranked and sorted into 15 general categories. One hundred and twenty-four archers from 17 countries participated through archery websites, including: Mathewsinc.com, ArcheryTalk.com, WildernessArcherySite.com, ArcheryWorld.com and BenPearson.com. There are many factors for an adult archer to consider, but I have narrowed it down to the Top Ten. In the previous two installments (Last two issues. Ed.), we looked at the size of the bow, the way the bow feels in the hand and the quality of its construction. In the second installment, we examined the functioning of the bow and the reliability of the company that made the bow.*

*In this final installment, we will discuss the final three points that archers feel are important to consider when buying a bow.*

### The Last Three Points

In this series we have been looking at These points are as important as the first ones, but they are generally considered later in the process. In a way, the last two points are tie-breakers for some archers; if the first eight points are the same, the last two will tip the scales to a particular bow.

### 8. Consistency and Accuracy

When you get to

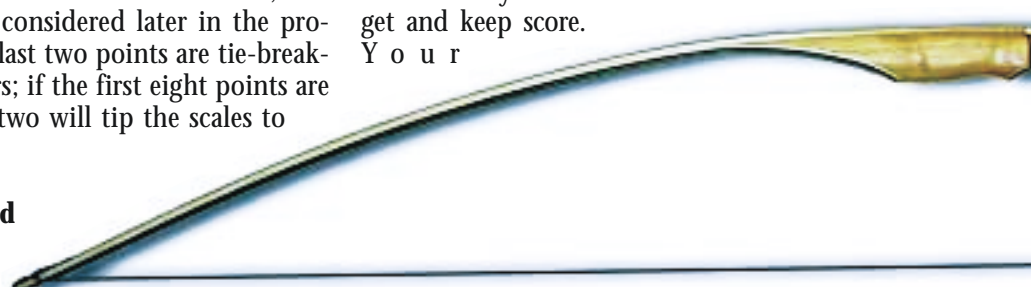
the line or in the tree stand, you want to know that your bow is going to behave the same way every shot. When you release the string, you need to know that your arrow is going to go where you have aimed it. None of us likes to admit that a missed shot was our own fault, but we certainly do not want it to be the bow's fault!

The advent of carbon limbs, machined risers, single cam bow designs, and modern synthetic string materials have had a profound impact on the consistency and accuracy of bows. Technology has created much better bows in recent years.

- Limbs are more stable.
- Risers are lighter in weight, yet stronger.
- Strings are faster and have less stretch.
- Cams on compounds are more efficient.

When trying out a bow, after you know that it fits and that you feel comfortable shooting it, shoot a game or two. The ideal distance is 20 yards, but shoot at 10 yards if you are not yet consistent with your own shot. Use a fresh target and keep score.

Y o u r



hole pattern will tell you a lot about the consistency of the bow (round is good). Your score will reveal the accuracy.

### **9. Price**

(*Note* Low end equipment will not have all the innovations of their more expensive counterparts, thus may not meet the criteria listed in points one through eight and will not be addressed in this section.)

Price is a deal-breaker on many a bow. You may find a perfect bow for you in every way, except for the price. Now what? There are a few options you can consider other than getting a second job or taking out a second mortgage on your home.

***“As you might expect, buying a bow for a child is completely different from buying a bow for an adult.”***

Buying a used bow is a great way to get quality equipment for a lower price. If you know the owner of the bow personally, you may know how the bow was maintained. Bows that have won multiple tournaments, or were owned by a top shooter, are desirable used purchases. Just keep in mind that you will probably not have the benefit of a warranty on it.

If a new bow is the only way you will go, then you have some work to do. You may be able to find the bow at another retailer for a lower price. But, if you buy the bow at Shop A because it is priced less, will you lose that savings by having to pay Shop B to work on it? Make sure you find out what is included in the sale before price shopping. A shop that has good technicians, and does free work on bows bought from them, is often more than worth the extra money you pay on the bow.

Ask your shop owner about their lay-a-way policy. Most will have some sort of plan and some will even allow you to set up and shoot the bow in the shop; you just cannot take it home until it's paid for. The average lay-a-way is half down and paid off in thirty

to sixty days. Do not even touch the subject of in-store credit. Unless you go to a national retailer (who probably does not carry the bow you want, anyway) you will not be successful.

If you are ordering a bow, then you may have some more leeway. Some of the more popular bows can take a month or more to arrive at the shop. That is just more time to save up.

Finally, one way to create good feelings between you and the shop owner is to pay with cash or check. The fees that shops have to pay on credit really takes a bite out of their profits and cuts down on the amount of merchandise they can buy for the shop. Plus, by not using credit, you are not paying the interest that makes the bow cost even more!

### **10. Maintenance**

This point is cited more with regard to older compound bows and bows using a two-cam system. Older bows were noted for the maintenance issues of cracked limbs or bent axles and risers. Two-cam bows were listed with concerns with their timing.

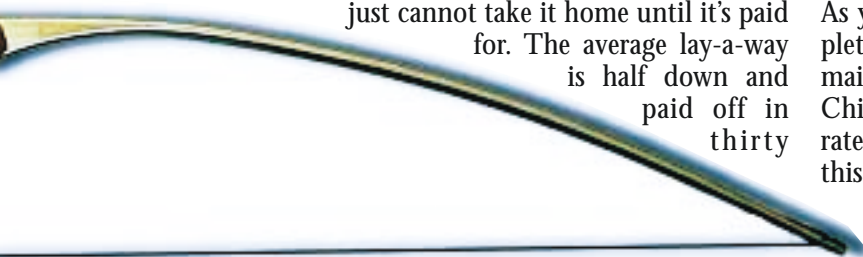
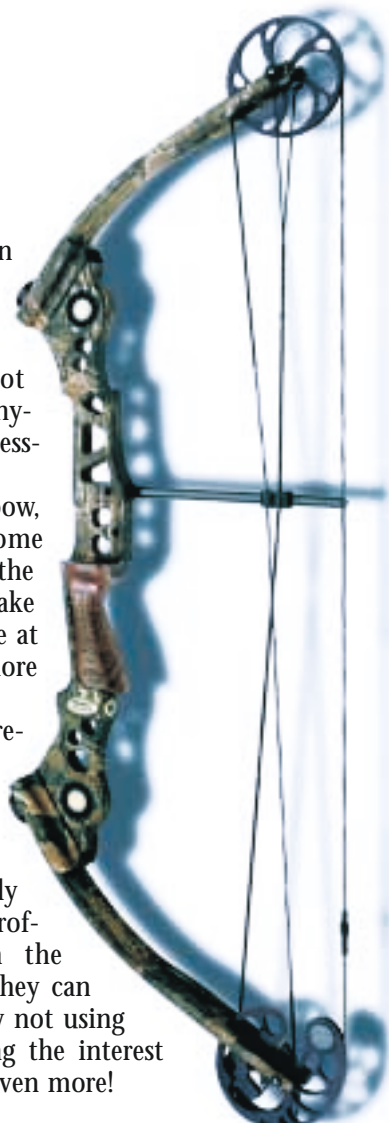
All bows experience some modicum of string stretch and should be checked on a regular basis for axle-to-axle distance and brace height changes. If you are completely sold on the bow, but not the string or cables, change them out for ones you prefer.

### **Buying a Bow for a Child**

As you might expect, buying a bow for a child is completely different from buying a bow for an adult. The main point to consider with a child is their growth. Children get taller and stronger at almost alarming rates. Bows that worked great last month may not fit this month.

Recurve archers have the issue of limb weight and length. As children gain strength, heavier weight

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limbs need to be purchased. Growth is an issue, but only after a child has grown a significant amount. At that time, longer limbs are in order, followed by a longer riser. Once the child gets to the point of needing a longer riser, they are usually looking at upgrading into a higher quality competition bow.

Compound archers are affected equally by growth and strength. Most compound bows have a set draw length range and you have to purchase new cams every time the child grows at a cost of \$50-\$100 each time. There are several bows on the market that have adjustable draw lengths of anywhere from five to ten inches. These bows are great for children who grow like weeds, but do not gain in strength as quickly.

Compound bows, generally, have ten to twelve pounds of draw weight adjustments. If you are able to purchase a bow that your child can comfortably shoot at the lowest weight, then you have all that strength they can gain before anything else need be done. Before you buy a compound bow for a child, ask about the upgrade policy of the manufacturer. You may be able to send the bow back to the manufacturer, with a modest fee, and have the limbs replaced with heavier limbs when the child outgrows the current set.

Finally, when buying a bow for a child, never buy more bow than the child can handle. If the child can only handle 25 pounds, do not buy them a 40-pound bow and assume that they will grow into it. Over-bowing children puts them at risk for shoulder and back injury and is one of the reasons that children give up the sport. Buy a bow your child can comfortably shoot without stress or strain on the bones and muscles. A lit-

tle inconvenience in having to upgrade sooner than planned is worth having a safe, happy, and healthy child.

### Take With You

Below is a handy list you can take with you when you go on your next bow-shopping trip. See if your criteria match those who's opinions contributed to the data collected for this series.



*Ava McDowell is an elementary/middle school music teacher in New Haven, Michigan. She coaches in the Royal Oak Archers JOAD program in Lake Orion, MI, in charge of the Senior Division and compound archers. Currently she is working on a Level 2 coaching certificate as well as developing a comprehensive curriculum for the program. Ava is an avid student of the sport, competing at the state level with plans to move into national competition in 2006.*

### Qualities to Look for in a Bow

- 1 ATA/Brace Height/Length/Fit
- 2 Feel/Balance/Grip/Weight
- 3 Quality/Workmanship/Finish/Appearance
- 4 Smoothness/Draw Cycle/Let-off
- 5 Speed
- 6 Customer Support/Manufacturer Reputation/Warranty
- 7 Noise
- 8 Consistency/Accuracy
- 9 Price
- 10 Low Maintenance