

Steve Ruis

# Traditional Archery

## A Newbie Does the Nationals

*It is one of archery's best hidden tournaments and I was invited to compete. I am talking about the NAA's Traditional Nationals.*

This year's event was the tenth year of this tournament, which was created for traditional archers to test themselves against the rounds that had been shot throughout the long history of the NAA. From the NAA's founding in 1879 until well into the 1940s, everyone shot longbows. And the rounds shot were the traditional English rounds: the York Round, the Hereford and Columbia Rounds, and even an occasional American Round or two. The new tourney's classifications have been Traditional Longbow (backed or selfbow but no fiberglass or modern laminates), Modern Longbow (laminated longbows), and Traditional Recurve (one piece or take down, but all wood). This year the Traditional Recurve division was expanded to allow short stabilizers, sights (if directly fixed to the bow-no extenders), and aluminum arrows but no more modern materials (carbon, modern string materials) and no clickers.

The tournament is held on the weekend immediately prior to the NAA Nationals which were in Colorado Springs, CO this year. It

rained during the 'main event' but we had absolutely gorgeous weather for the traditional tournament.

Official practice was available Friday afternoon and I took advantage of it to check my points of aim (you are allowed artificial points of aim but I couldn't get them into the trees behind the targets). I am really glad I did check my points of aim as all of them were different from those I had worked out in California! (Was it the elevation? The thin air?) Please real-



*The shooting line for the Clout Round.*

ize that I am primarily a compound bow shooter and I had never shot a longbow in earnest. At last year's championship, Brian Luke talked me into competing this year and we agreed he would build me a bow to my specifications (well, he actually talked me out of what I wanted into something that had a chance of success). The new bow came just two months prior to the competition, so I didn't have a huge amount of time to practice. Having been known to need a backup bow from time to time, I purchased an inexpensive longbow as a practice/backup bow, so I did have more than the two months to prepare.

I now have even more respect than I used to have for those archers who choose to shoot traditional equipment. The rounds we shot were a York Round on Saturday (72 arrows at 100 yards, 48 arrows at 80 yards, and 24 arrows at 60 yards) followed on Sunday by an American Round (30 arrows at 60 yards, 30 arrows at 50 yards, and 30 arrows at 40 yards) and a Clout Round (36 arrows at 165 yards). Yes, I said yards, even though the meter goes back to the 1700s, it is a more recent innovation in archery.

I have to tell you that shooting wooden arrows out of a selfbow at a four foot round target 100 yards away is a test! One of my better ends of six arrows found two arrows in the grass directly in front of the target, one arrow in the little sign under the target (the target number), one arrow in the target, and two arrows in the grass behind the target—all lined up in a row; I had good line but lousy control over my draw length! Now this is the standard FITA 122 cm target (122 cm = 48 inches by the way), but we used the



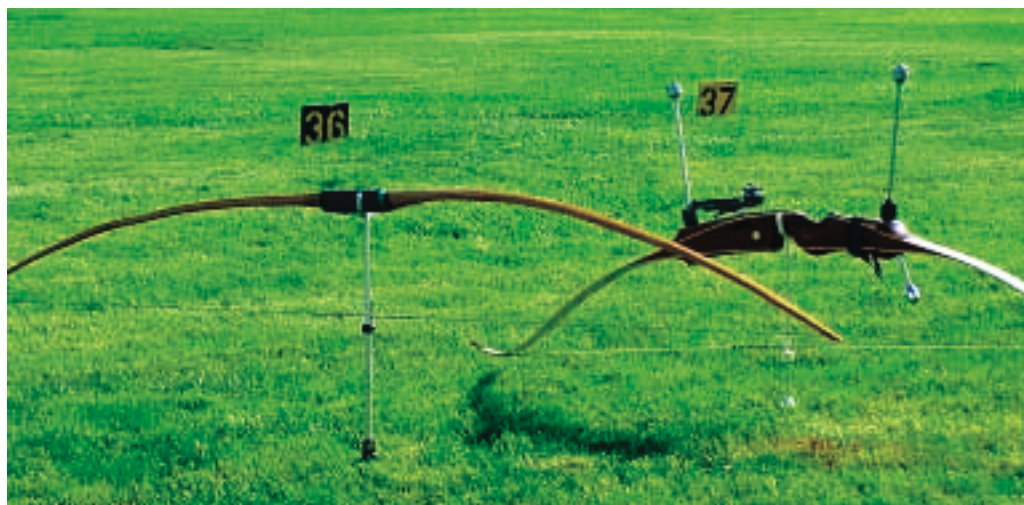
*Our hardworking Judge was the inestimable and indefatigable Jane Johnson.*

old scoring system (9 for gold, 7 for red, 5 for blue, 3 for black, and 1 for white). This enables you to compare your score with the scores from the "old days." I won't tell you my score (it is posted on the NAA's web site, but I am not going to make it easy for you) but I would have been in the middle of the pack . . . in 1879.

From someone who has a goal of "holding the red" at 90 meters in a FITA round with my compound setup, this was a humbling experience . . . and about as much fun as I have had at a tournament in decades!

Sunday morning the American Round went by amazingly quickly and after the lunch break I found that I was, well, pooped. I hadn't shot in competition in a while and, in case you don't know, there is no letoff on a longbow. Having 35 pounds "in hand" (at 32 inches) was about twice what I was used to. But since everyone knew I was from California and I didn't want to be accused of being a 'girly man,' I agreed to have a fling at the clout.

The men's clout flag is 165 yards out and you have to get within 20 feet of it to score. With my 35 pound draw weight, it was clear I didn't have enough oomph to score, even with my lightest arrows, so I pulled out a longbow I had brought along just to show. It was an



*New this year was the Traditional Recurve featuring sights, and short stabilizers, but no clicker.*



A happy group of traditional archers. (That's Brian Luke playing peek-a-boo with the camera!)

English longbow, complete with horn tips, but it also had a 45 pound bow at 28 inches, clearly out of my league. I somehow managed to pull it to almost full draw and score some arrows (most of my misses were too far!).

By the end of the two days, I was . . . let's just say 'quite tired' . . . and happy. I had a ball. I would be remiss if I didn't mention that Norm Graham and Brian Luke doubled up and shot two styles. This means they shot a *double* York, a *double* American, and a *double* Clout Round. Now, they had a real excuse for being tired!

A small medal ceremony followed in which Darryl Pace, then NAA President and a two-time Olympic gold medalist, handed out the medals. Now that doesn't happen at too many field tournaments.

This is a tournament that is challenging, interesting, and a blast. I was a little fearful that people might be, well, . . . a bit stuffy (period costumes *are* allowed) but that feeling was allayed immediately before the first arrows on Saturday when a participant said there was a tradition of a couple of side competitions: one for the "ugliest score of one" and one for the most arrows "in the green" (green = grass). I am not afraid to say that I was very competitive in both of those competitions: I had an outside-in line cutter for a score of one that got me a share of first place in the "ugliest one" contest and I took the "most greens" award outright. Norm Graham, former NAA President and guiding light behind this tourney is making up a trophy for the

"most greens" competition of a piece of Astroturf with miniature arrows embedded. I intend *not* winning the award next year!

I invite all of you traditional archers out there to join us at the Traditional Nationals in 2007. It will be, once again, in Colorado Springs, the weekend before the NAA Nationals. Check the NAA's website, [www.usarchery.org](http://www.usarchery.org), for dates and forms.

You will have fun; I promise.

**Steve Ruis** is a newbie traditional archer who also happens to edit this Magazine.

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# Scoring the Clout Round

The Clout Round was developed as a test of archers shooting over castle walls. And, as you can imagine, the arrows (six per person per end) are scattered over quite a wide area. I imagined that scoring each end was going to be interminable, but it wasn't. Each end took less than five minutes to score. Here is how it was done.



The key to scoring the Clout Round is a rope or cable attached to the flag. It is marked off in four foot lengths. If you get within the first four feet of the flag you score a five, in the next four feet, you score a four, and so forth for three, two, one, and zero.

One person attends each scoring zone on the rope while the rope is swept through a 360° circle. Each person pulls those arrows whose impact points are in their zone (*see below right*). Once the circle has been swept and all of the scoring arrows pulled, the arrows are laid on the rope for scoring and retrieval (*see below left*).



When the scorers call your name, you walk the rope and claim your arrows, calling out the scores they achieved (under the watchful eyes of your competitors, of course). That's me, background right, looking for my nonscoring arrows. (It's gauche to call them "misses," don't you think?)

I think this would be a fun round for youth archery programs (the target butts and faces are quite inexpensive)!