

Lanny Bassham

# Mental Skills

## Dealing with Distractions

Part 2 of 2

*Welcome back to the topic of dealing with distractions. In the last issue we looked at several ways that other people can distract a competitor in a competition. In this article we will add to the list and then look at the number one distraction and what to do about it.*

**People Distraction Number Three: The Socialite** I believe that there are four participation levels in sport: people-training-to-learn the sport, people-training-to-compete, people-training-to-win, and people-advancing-the-sport to a completely new level. The Socialite often starts in the people-training-to-learn level and then advances to the people-training-to-compete level. Understand this. The Socialite is in this for recreation, not recognition. They will not advance to the people-training-to-win level because it is just not important to them. What is important is that they have a really good time at the competition. I personally have no problem with Socialites as long as they flock with other similar species. They become a distraction to the People-Training-to-Win competitors (PTWs) when they rationalize that they are actually PTW competitors themselves. Remember,

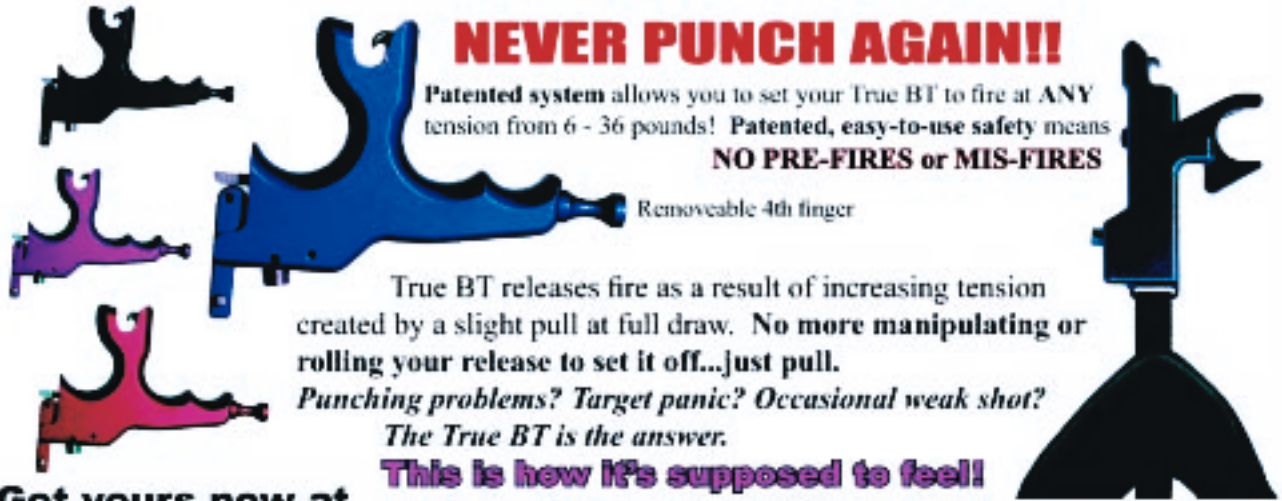
PTW competitors are there to perform well and to win the competition. Enjoyment follows execution in the priority of the PTW competitor. The Socialite may tend to pull the PTW competitor's focus away from why they are there. Socialites are more interested in you becoming like them than paying the price to become like you.

Are we enjoying ourselves so much with the Socialites that we fail to run our mental system? Now do not be confused by my point here. I believe that the PTW competitors can and should have Socialite friends. He should respect them for their level of dedication and not look down on or talk down to them because they do not share his goals. He is not better than them in any way. He just has a different priority; he places winning over enjoyment. Equally, the Socialite should not blame the PTW competitor when he begs off of going to the bar for a nightcap after dinner. He is not being rude or unfriendly. His need for a good night's sleep is important for his chances of winning and rates a higher priority than being out late with his buddies. It is good for the Socialite to have PTW competitor friends and vice versa as long as they do not try to



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remake the other in their image or make them feel guilty for being who they are.

### ***People Distraction Number Four: The Over-tight***

Have you ever tightened a nut on a bolt so tight that the nut breaks? The Over-tight archer is at the opposite end of the spectrum from the Socialite. Where the Socialite is not concerned about winning, the Over-tight is only concerned about it. They are wound so tight they squeak when they walk. The Over-tight distract everyone that they come close to. Serious is not a strong enough word to describe them! They are so intense to be downright petrified. They are only concerned about winning. If they are not winning, they are unhappy and, if they do win, they complain because they could have scored higher or had a higher x-count. Do not be distracted by the Over-tight's apparent zeal or try to compare yourself to them. They tend to exaggerate how hard they are training in preparation for the event. Do not get too near them either because they tend to explode.

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### ***People Distraction Number Five: The Analyst***

I love to watch the commentators in the NFL games on television. They always have a play-by-play man and an analyst. You've seen them. The Analyst is quick to point out that they were once the champion and this is how we did things back then. He will go on to indicate that today is not as good as his day. Archery Analysts are legends in his own minds. They are experts at Monday morning quarterbacking your training plan, your equipment and even your style of shooting. Analysts tend to compare today's technique with last year's and this event's winner with last year's winner. Be careful of the Analyst when they compare your instructor

***“Our sport grows because there is a balance between the focus on winning and the joy of just being around people who love to shoot.”***

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against their current favorite instructor because last year their current favorite was someone else; normally from far, far away.

***People Distraction Number Six: The Complainer***

They complain about everything: the entry fee is too high, the lighting is not up to par, the scoring is unfair, the rules are interpreted incorrectly, not enough participants this year, too many participants this year, that old injury showed up again, got a new injury, left a piece of equipment home again, parking lot is full, favorite motel is full, credit card is full, gas is too high, line surface is too slick, peep did not turn, alarm clock didn't work this morning, don't like it when people watch them, don't like it when people don't watch them, cannot get problems at the job off of their mind, can't find a job, can't find a spouse, wishes they had a more understanding spouse, wishes they didn't have a spouse but more than anything else they wish everyone would stop complaining so much.

***“The number one distraction is that you discover that you have become one of the people who are distracting others. Get your act together.”***

***People Distraction Number Seven: The Thrower/Slammer***

When frustration peaks and somehow a Thrower/Slammer loses it, they are likely to throw or slam something to let out the frustration of the day. You would like to think that a mature person would have more self-control. The Thrower/Slammer is reinforcing the error by this kind of behavior. Mentally mature people do not respond to their environment in such an immature way. Thank goodness there are just a few of these folks in the sport. If the throw/slam is accompanied by colorful expletives, then we know that the last bit of self-control has left the archer for certain and they need to go to time out.

Okay, now for the number one distraction. This is the big one and the one you must avoid at all cost. The number one distraction is that you discover that you have become one of the people who are distracting others. Get your act together. Become the competitor that others want to compete with. If you are not in it

***“We might best take a lesson from our young children in the joy department. Win or lose, they are never distracted from having fun.”***

to win, then respect those who are. If your only concern is winning, remember that not everyone is wired that way. We like a person that is focused on doing well, but also keeps the needs of others a high priority. We don't need a complainer, a criticizer, or a crank. We could use more understanding, more complementing, and more smiles all around. We like a humble winner and we promise to congratulate you when you win, if you will stop throwing things when you lose. Our sport grows because there is a balance between the focus on winning and the joy of just being around people who love to shoot. We might best take a lesson from our young children in the joy department. Win or lose, they are never distracted from having fun.

**Lanny Bassham** is an Olympic Coach and an Olympic Gold Medalist. He is a member of the Olympic Shooting Hall of Fame, ranks third among all shooters in total international medal count for the USA and is one of the most respected mental trainers in the world. His book ***With Winning in Mind*** and his ***Mental Management***® concepts are used and endorsed by Olympian and World Champion shooters. You can reach him at 1.800.879.5079 or at [www.mentalmanagement.com](http://www.mentalmanagement.com).



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