

Linda H. Beck

## Coaching at 2006 NAA Outdoor Nationals and Junior World Trials

I have been instructing/coaching two cadet compound archers, Adam Wruck and Corey Muellenbach from the Sartell, Minnesota area, for two and a half years. Last year we attended the NAA Outdoor Nationals in Colorado Springs, CO to see what competing in FITA tournaments was all about. It was a huge learning experience for all of us. We had a great time at the tournament, with Adam finishing fourth and Corey fifth. They were featured in the first edition of Archery Focus for Kids on-line magazine (It is a free download at [www.archeryfocus.com](http://www.archeryfocus.com). Ed.). On the drive home to Minnesota we started planning for the 2006 NAA Outdoor Nationals and Junior World Trials.

Our 2006 tournament trail started with a strong performance and finish at the NAA Indoor Championships. Next, it was the JOAD Outdoor Nationals in Lebanon, Ohio. After a good performance but disappointing finish in Lebanon, I sat down in my motel room, thought

about their respective performances, and determined what they needed to practice before the Junior World Trials to achieve their goal of making the team. I developed an action plan for each of them with specific tasks to improve physical aspects of their shots and mental games. I discussed their respective "to-do" lists with each of them. In addition, I took what I learned from networking with other coaches about tuning Easton X10 arrows and made some equipment changes.

Coaching at this year's Outdoor Nationals and Junior World Trials was one of the most exhilarating, challenging experiences in my coaching career. Throughout the four days my coaching skills were tested, providing me with many opportunities to learn and enhance my skills. I remember clearly the look on one of the boy's faces after he had just shot a group with most of the arrows in the red at one of the long distances. His expression was one of: "What just

happened? I have don't have a clue." I, too, didn't really know, but the placement of the arrows in the target as well as knowing the archer gave me a clue. It was critical I find the words to get him to forget what just happened, re-focus and shoot again as if it never happened. I found the words, he came right back to placing the arrows in the gold.

One of the most rewarding moments was when one of them came off the shooting line and told me he realized his cautious aiming/controlling shot didn't work as well as just shooting, trusting his skills and aiming as best he could, letting the sight aperture naturally float on the target. (What I refer to as a



Corey Muellenbach, Coach Beck, and Adam Wruck at the NAA Outdoor Nationals.

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Coaching Archery



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dynamic shot.) I had been working with him on this concept for months. He couldn't have found a better time to ingrain this concept into his shot. Abandoning his cautious shot and shooting dynamically the rest of the tournament resulted in his advancement from fifth in the first FITA round to first for the second FITA round.

The most challenging time was after the third day of competition. My other archer had struggled that day performing well below his abilities, which left him about 10 points out of third place. We both knew he had the ability to come back; it was a matter of self confidence and focus on shooting or performance. There could be absolutely no thoughts about score. (Score is an outcome, a result of performance.) He had to focus 100% on shooting and the score would take care of itself. Through out the fourth day I resisted the temptation to ask what his score was, or how much he was ahead or behind. If I asked him about score, I risked his focus switching from shooting to score, a risk he could not afford. I watched the running total and asked the runners about scores, so I knew his score, but kept it to myself. I knew I could show no outward emotion which could place additional pressure on my archer. Oh, there was a lot on inward emotion! I was constantly thinking, "You need to score a

30 this end." After last end was shot, he had come back, winning third place by one point. His shooting form never faltered; he did exactly what he had been taught to do. I am very proud of both Corey and Adam; they finished second and third in Male Compound Cadet Class for both the NAA Outdoor Nationals and the Junior World Trials.

Every tournament is an opportunity to learn: to learn what you did well and what you need to do to improve. That includes the coach! I learn from every student and every opportunity I have to coach. So, I am back to evaluating performance, creating action plans and "to-do" lists to prepare for the Junior World Championships in Merida, Mexico.