

Maintenance and Repair of a Whitetail Target Bale by Rick Stonebraker

Maintenance and Repair of a Whitetail Target

The Whitetail target matt is probably the most usable target matt going right now because it is lightweight, you can roll it along the ground, and easy to store with minimal maintenance. The one downside is that it is made from ethyfoam, which deteriorates if left in the sun.

Preventive Maintenance

To protect the matt from deteriorating, either store it out of the sun or place a cover over the matt when not in use.

The other minor downside is the center of the matt. The matts are made by rolling a continuous layer of foam starting from the center. Ironically, the weakest part of the target is also the busiest area of the matt.

When shooting at these matts, avoid placing the target over the direct center of the matts; this will prolong the life of the center. This can be unavoidable when using the 122cm target faces but thankfully, this is only done when shooting at the longer distances. It is recommended that when shooting at faces smaller than 122cm, place the target face slightly askew of center. During a sanctioned FITA event, the target face can be shifted left or right. To take advantage of all places available around the center, the matt can be turned to take advantage of all areas and still comply with FITA regulations.

The other major advantage of a Whitetail matt is that they are made with replaceable centers, typically 24". This is a great innovation and cost conscious. For the average person who cannot replace centers at their convenience or the cost-conscious "frugal" archer, a little ingenuity can make the centers last even longer.

The noodle repair.

If you cannot shift the center of the target face during a tournament or during practice and you blow out the center of the target, there is a nifty method to fix the center. Use one of those inexpensive swimming noodles.



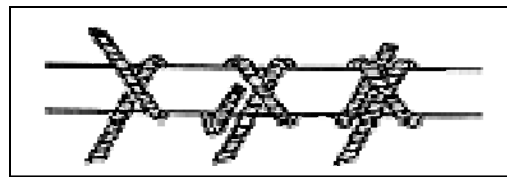
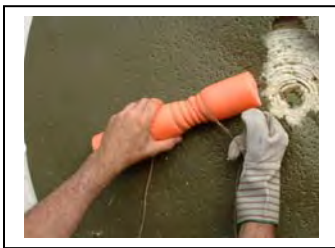
Cut a piece approximately 2" longer than the thickness of the matt.

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Take a length of string (five feet) and tie an overhand knot the middle of the 10" noodle plug.

Start wrapping very tightly but avoid cutting into the noodle plug. You may want to use a pair of gloves on the pulling hand, trust me on this. Wrap about every half-inch to an inch. After finishing one end, finish with 3-4 wraps around the very end or use a **clove hitch** to hold the string in place.



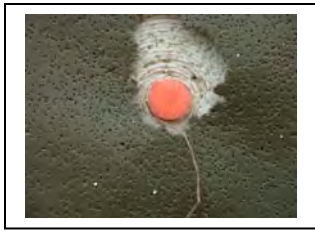
Wrap the other end of the noodle in the same manner. You now have a plug that is about 2-3 inches in diameter and hopefully the hole in the center is not larger than this.



Clear out any pieces of foam that is in the hole. It should be a nice clean symmetrical hole **all** the way through. If not, take a pair of needle-nose pliers and remove any loose pieces.



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Notice which way the foam layers are wrapped. When you insert the plug, make sure to turn against the direction of the wrapped layers. If you turn with the layers, it will get tight and will feel like a set of Chinese finger cuffs. Twist the plug until it is inserted the whole way into the hole, leaving an inch on either end if possible.

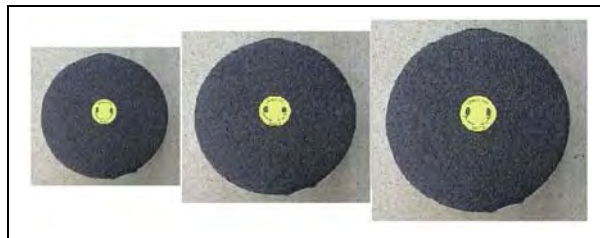
After the plug is inserted, start from either end and start unwrapping the string from around the plug, alternating from both sides. It will get harder as you unwind as the noodle is expanding. Do not pull the string out but unwrap it as you pull. When the string appears to have stopped unwrapping, you probably have reached the overhand knot in the middle. You can pull from both ends until the string breaks or you can just cut off the excessive string.



If you want, you can wrap the whole noodle in one direction but remember to alternate unwrapping from both side to keep the noodle in the center of the core.

Stanley Hipps repair

After several "noodle" repairs, the surrounding areas of the center will get weak from use and eventually, there will not be enough surrounding foam to adequately hold a noodle. There are larger noodles out there so you could go through the process of a larger-noodle repair. But there is yet another way to preserve that 24" center before replacing it. You can use one of Stanley Hipps replaceable centers. They come in sizes of 8", 10", 12", 18", and 23".



Cut out the center of the target until you have approximately an inch or so less than the diameter of the Stanley Hipps core. These cores are designed with a slight taper for easier insertion from the front, which prevents them from pushing through the back. Place the matt on the ground and place the core from the top, gently stepping on the core until it is started in the matt. Because the core may be thicker than the thickness of the matt, turn

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the whole project over and walk around the edge of the core until the front is even. There will be some core protruding from the backside but that will make the core last longer.



These innovative ideas will extend the life of the center of the core a bit longer, which in turn will extend the life of your matt a lot longer. And with the cost of everything going up, let's stretch that archery dollar a little bit further and put that towards other archery equipment.

Rick Stonebraker
Houston, Texas