

THE BARE NECESSITIES

If you've admired the ability of barebow archers but are unsure whether it's the bow for you, three recent medal winners discuss its merits

Mary Louca of St Neots Bowmen and James Annall of Bath Archers won gold in the barebow events at the National Indoor Championships 2021, while Noak Hill Archers' Amelia Chumber won silver. So what makes a barebow champion?



JAMES ANNALL BATH ARCHERS

I took up archery in 2008 when I started university. I went to a have-a-go during freshers' week and was hooked. Other than the first two weeks of the beginners' course, I only shot recurve for the first year using a club wooden trainer bow. I think I struggled a lot with finger pinching the arrow, having big hands and a long draw length.

The second year I gave barebow a try as I wanted to try competing. I wasn't selected for the university league's match shooting recurve, and the British barebow champs

happened to be about three weeks later, so I put my name down for that. There were a couple of relatively good barebowers in the club who showed me the ropes with string-walking. I progressed from there, experimenting as I went along.

I love the challenge of barebow; it's very much a journey, experimenting with different techniques and aiming references and methods to find what suits you best. Using the arrow for aiming, I feel a stronger connection to the bow than recurve.

Over the years, I've got pretty clued up on the technical aspects of maintaining the bow. There was very little information out there giving specific details of barebow set-up in the past, and it was a case of relying on the FITA manual.

I must stress the importance of basic bow set-up (same as a recurve), limb alignment, bracing height, nock points, centre shot etc. For string walking, particularly for shorter distances, a high nock point and possibly negative tiller might be needed to stop the bow feeling twitchy. For group tuning I just adjust the button, I'll make tiny adjustments to the centre shot to adjust group size, and then adjust the button pressure to move the group left or right.

I've been making my own strings for about ten years. Ordering several strings for a 72" bow gave inconsistent lengths, so I decided to make my own; it comes in useful for different limb brands. I've made my own tabs for about eight years too, mainly because there wasn't much choice back then for a 'three-under' tab, plus it keeps the cost down.

The biggest challenges of shooting are the same as for recurve really; it's just harder to keep draw length consistent, not having a clicker. Aiming references can also be a challenge for outdoors; it took several years of experimenting to find what worked consistently for me. I combine string walking



>> Going to competitions is like having an archery extended family. It's a chance to catch up with people around the country, see how they're getting on. <<

and anchoring under the chin for longer distances (corner of mouth reference for shorter distances). The most important factor for me is being able to aim at the middle of the target (or at least somewhere on the vertical centreline of the boss) for all distances, otherwise you're relying on trees or patches of daisies to aim at.

I didn't do any special prep for the National Indoor Championships. I put my focus on executing my shot routine, with only a small amount on aiming. I know that if I execute the shot properly then I'll score at least an eight, and if I get any nerves, I just need to muffle them and get on with the routine – stretching the diaphragm by moving about or humming.

There was a fair bit of luck too. My grouping wasn't quite up to scratch on the day, whether down to the lighting or my tab needing a trim, I'm not sure. I just kept a level head, shooting 27s on my good ends. Luckily the couple of awful ends I had in the semis and finals coincided with my opponents' best ends.

Going to competitions is like having an archery extended family. It's a chance to catch up with people around the country, see how they're getting on, and push each other to improve with some friendly rivalry.

I'll start doing a bit more outdoor target shooting again now that barebow is a recognised category for World Archery, and with the introduction of the 50m 720 round, it'll be useful to gain more head to head experience. My ambitions are to get some British records, and I'd like to medal at World/Europeans for field/3D, and perhaps target too if barebow gets added to the international target events.

It's been great to see barebow going through a bit of a renaissance thanks to people such as John Demmer III, David Jackson, Jake Kaminski, and Martin Godio putting useful content out there.

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