

An Exercise for Improving your Aiming

By Mike Geard – courtesy of Archery Focus

The intention of this article is to give you an exercise that will improve your comfort level during the act of aiming. This exercise is an excellent way to address the issue of target panic as well. We often hear the term target panic used with varying definitions. I make no attempt to define just what target panic is, but do express that the exercise I am about to share with you will reduce the anxiety that often fuels the various affects of target panic. This exercise is also excellent at improving your ability to aim off the centre of the target in windy conditions. The exercise is equally effective no matter what style of equipment you shoot, be it compound and release, Olympic style recurve, or bowhunter. It has worked for everyone that has been offered the exercise.

Here is the aiming exercise –

- *The first thin to do is choose a location on a target butt off of the centre to aim at. This could be at 12:00, 3:00, 6:00 or 9:00 o'clock positions as long as you can also see the centre of the target also. I like to choose a line on the target to aim at make this a precise location such as 12:00 o'clock on the 9/8 or 8/7 lines.*
- *After shooting a few arrows while aiming off, adjust your sight so that you hit the middle while aiming off.*
Note – If you choose a 3 or 9 o'clock position, note the number of turns you have made to your windage adjustment in order to hit the middle. This is so you can adjust it back when the time comes to aim on again.
- *At this point, come to full draw the way you normally do and briefly aim hard with great focus at your chose location. Next, move your eye's focus to the centre of the target (where you are trying to get your arrows to hit) and shoot the arrow while focussed on the middle. The sight will stay in your peripheral vision, but your direct focus is on the centre of the target.*
What this does for you is to relieve your direct focus from the act of aiming. You are still aware of your pin out there in your peripheral vision, but you are not having it's image in your direct focus. The center of the target is instead in your direct focus.

Why it Works: As you shoot using this exercise, you will notice your face and neck becoming more relaxed and that you shoot a nice relaxed shot. The reason for this is that you are not painfully aware of the movement in your sight pin and this relieves the stress that aiming puts on your shot sequence. Target panic is a product of the stress or 'lock up' that occurs when your sight picture does not allow you to complete your shot properly. The message your sight picture sends to your brain is that you are not aimed perfectly and are there fore not ready to shoot. By being totally focussed on your sight pin, your brain is bombarded with continually changing signals that in effect say, "Okay, I'm ready ... now I'm not ... okay, ready again, Oh no, not yet@ ... Creating a "start and stop" set of signals to all of the control centres of your shot. Ever

shoot an arrow at the instant that the signal says, "No, not ready yet?" In my case, it is not a pretty sight! This start and stop confidence crusher is the foundation for target panic. We become fearful of shooting the arrow at the wrong instant. Typically this is caused by the event of that very thing happening during a perfectly good day of shooting! By shifting your sight picture to being focused on a target empty of a sight, it is almost like shooting barebow, and the fear of shooting the arrow at the wrong instant gradually goes away!

Not only does the fear of shooting an arrow at the wrong instant gradually build up on you, it also gradually goes away through the positive reinforcement of having success. This is how the exercise works; by aiming intensely at the beginning of the shot, you in effect burn the image into your memory. When you turn your active attention to the center of the target, the burned in image stays in your peripheral vision and even though you are not focused on your aiming device, I guarantee you are still aware of exactly where it is aimed. This restores your smooth shot execution and removes the hesitation from your shooting motion. You also get a beautiful picture of the ten ring and your arrow hitting it without the obstruction of a sight pin. Since success breeds confidence, you begin to strengthen your faith in the fact that you can relax and shoot a good strong shot without having aimed on a pinpoint. Gradually you will become comfortable shooting with a full view of the center as you get to watch your arrows hitting it!

Once you feel you have restored your confidence in your shooting and sighting picture, you will notice that when aiming on the center with your sight again, you are able to do so without concern for the normal movements that take place during the shot. You are also able to keep your focus on the target with your sight pin in the background instead of bouncing your focus back and forth between your sight and the target. This gives a more relaxed nature to the aiming process and allows your face and neck to have less tension in them. That relaxation seems to spread through the rest of your body as well.

Shooting in the Wind. The way this exercise helps your wind shooting is that you can pick the spot you wish to aim off based on the wind conditions, place your pin there and then look at the center of the target. By having your pin in your peripheral vision, you shoot a faster, smoother shot because you do not get the instant feedback of the wind pushing your aiming picture around! In windy conditions, it is always more effective if you can execute strong shots quickly so that there is less opportunity to be purchased off by the wind. By not watching the moving sight pin, it is easier to shoot at the middle with strength an enthusiasm.

I have heard the comment that shooting with an aperture will do the same thing as this exercise, but I beg to differ. The reason is that your focus still has the opportunity to bounce between your aperture ring and the target. Also, even though you look through an aperture and do not have as much awareness of

the small movements you are making, you do still consciously center the aperture throughout the shot! The exercise I described allows you to purposely not enter anything. Once you get used to looking away from your sight pin, it is absolutely in your peripheral vision as long as your focus remains on the middle forcing you to rely on your instincts to a greater degree. Once you get the positive reinforcement of being able to rely on your instincts, the effects on your comfort zone are positive.

If you have been struggling with your sighting picture and/or shot executive, I hope this article makes you want to go out and shoot your bow. If you find that this is an effective exercise for you, it is nice to know that you can practise it any time you feel hesitation creeping into your shot. Practicing good habits is always the key to conquering your goals. This exercise is yet another way to fight back when you start to hesitate during the execution of your shot.



At the 2019 Grand Prix final which was held at Warringah Archers early in February, Warringah Archers had 4 finalists, with incentives being given to those that medalled in the final round. Well done to Maja who obtained a Silver Medal at the event and

received **\$100** from the club, well deserved.

AdBow/KidBow Qualifiers: 22nd Feb

15m 80cm face: Jessica Greenalgh (RIG) 168
10m 122cm face: Ashleigh Mercer (RU20G), Callyn Sergas (RUB) 244, Hazel McKillop (RUG) 213, Alexandra Clements (RUG) 142, Teo Platter (RUB) 217



10m 80cm face: Heather Maddock (RCW), Harrison Skelton (RIB) 190, Joshua Mercer (RIB) 192, Tegan Scott (RIG) 186, Kevin Tompkins (RM) 261, Jennifer Thompson (RMW) 241, Leonardo Paletto (RUB) 200, Nick Shelter (RMM) 256, Melody Paletto (RU10G) 172 & Radovan Jakub Horak (RCM) 223
10m 60cm face: Kiera De Rooij (RUG) 144



Also well done to Kevin Tompkins who achieved his All Gold @ 10m

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BIRTHDAYS FOR MARCH



**Justin Van Emerick (3rd), Jonwen Qui & Roland Ware (10th)
 Steve Jennison (20th) Kirstie Morrison (26th)**

DID YOU KNOW:

Archery NSW – Indoor Training Sessions
 Monday Nights 6.00pm to 9.00pm - March 2020
 ANSW has obtained an indoor shooting facility at the Genea Netball NSW Centre at Sydney Olympic Park as part of the establishment of the ANSW Centre of Excellence. This facility is available for ANSW and AA members. Entry form can be located on ArcheryNSW Website, under events -
<https://archerynsw.org.au/event/indoor-training-sessions-monday-nights-february-and-march-2020-4/>

There will be a \$20 entry fee (plus \$1.10 transaction fee) to shoot at each session