

# Starting Tournaments

It can be a very daunting idea to enter a tournament. Many new archers would like to do one, but they don't know who to ask, or what to do, or where to go. Sometimes they think "I'll never be good enough to do a tournament", or "I need such-and-such gear to do a tournament, and I can't afford that".

In reality, starting tournaments is easy! But I know that without the guidance of some senior members in my club, I would never have known what to do. Remember if you're not sure, just ask.

## What kind of tournaments are there?

In New Zealand there are two kinds of tournaments: *Registered Minor Tournaments* and *Major Tournaments*.

Registered Minor Tournaments are held by clubs so that archers can achieve scores that they need to qualify for major tournaments, international tournaments, and improve their NZ ranking. They are usually standardized, full-day shoots with a timing system for each end. Whites or club uniform should be worn.

For a first time at a tournament, an RMT is a good idea, because it gives you a taste of what a major tournament is like. You also don't have to fill out a full entry form, although you will have to register by letting the organizing club know that you will be there so that they can arrange space on the line for you. You might have to pay a target fee (usually \$5) to cover the cost of a fresh target.

Major Tournaments are held around the country throughout the year. They have been registered with Archery New Zealand, and often there are medals for coming 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> in your division. Whites or club uniform must be worn, and you will have to fill out an entry form and pay an entry fee.

## What are whites?

When someone tells you that you can wear whites, it means if you don't have a club uniform to wear, you can still shoot at a tournament. "Whites" mean white trousers or shorts and a white t-shirt or jersey. You don't need to wear white shoes. Now you can wear sportswear, as long as it's sensible for archery, eg black shorts and a white shirt.

## Where can I find an entry form?

All registered tournaments in New Zealand have their entry forms on the website [www.archerynz.co.nz](http://www.archerynz.co.nz), and very often your club will print off a bunch of these entry forms and have them on their noticeboard as well.

Entry fees are usually per day, or, for the National tournament, per event. You can pay for one day, if you



just want to do one, or both days.

For a first major tournament, you might just like to do one day, because it can be quite tiring, especially if you've never shot for a whole day before. Alternatively, you could always choose to do an RMT for a first tournament.

When filling out forms, you will have to provide your name, contact details, your club and to enter your division. If you are a junior, this means entering your birth date as well so the tournament organizers can put you in the correct division. If you are unsure, just ask a senior member, or have a look on the Archery NZ website. For a major tournament, you will also need to provide your Archery NZ number, which means you need to be affiliated to Archery NZ (you pay an annual fee).

## But I don't have carbon arrows or a metal bow. Can I still shoot?

As long as you have a bow and arrows, you can shoot a tournament. My first tournament I did with the wooden Samick beginner bow and aluminium arrows. As long as you have a bow that can reach the distance comfortably, then you can shoot at the tournament.

## I don't want to go alone to my first tournament.

This is quite normal! Most people are terrified of going to a tournament for the first time. Just ask around your club and see who else is going. Even if they are a senior and you are a junior, it is simply a good feeling to go along to a tournament and know that you know at least one other person there. Tournaments are a great way to meet other archers, especially in your division, and I know how daunting it is to go to a tournament without knowing anyone.

## **What about my family? Can they come?**

Of course! It helps to have someone there who can stand behind you and support you. Tell them to bring a camping chair so they can sit and watch. Then you have someone to hold your lunch for you! Remember in a major tournament they won't be allowed to walk to the target with you.

## **What if it rains?**

Chances are it will probably rain, unless it's an indoor tournament! Bring gear for every occasion: water bottles are essential, even if it isn't sunny. Bring a sunhat and sunscreen: remember you can get burned even when it's cloudy. And bring wet weather gear (usually a raincoat with sleeves you can roll or pin back).

If the weather at a tournament is called "inclement", then you can put on any clothing you have: wet weather or warm gear, just to stay warm and dry while you shoot. At that stage your uniform or whites take second tier to keeping you warm and dry!

## **When does it start?**

The start times are always on the entry form. If you're not sure, print out a copy and keep it with you. Always be at the tournament at least half an hour before the first practice end, so you can set up and get your gear inspected.

## **What is bow inspection?**

Bow inspection is when you bring your arrows and bow to the judge. The judge will then inspect your gear to make sure you have not made any illegal modifications, and then sign you off. They will check your fingertab, finger-sling, bow and arrows.

The one thing almost everyone (including seasoned tournament archers) will forget is to put their name on their arrows. All you need is a silver or white permanent marker, and on the shaft below the fletches, write your initials on each arrow. This means that if an arrow gets lost during the tournament, and it is found, they know who to return it to. Also, if you are shooting on the same target as someone who has the same colour fletches as you, you will be able to tell whose arrows are whose.

## **But I haven't been shooting for very long. Can I still do tournaments?**

There are no rules about when you can start tournaments. It's nice to have practice under your belt before you do begin, so you know safety rules and a general idea about scoring. But you can start tournaments as soon as you like. I began archery in February. In July I had my first tournament – only 5 months after I began.

## **When I get there, where do I shoot?**

Every tournament has a target draw. This is a list of the targets set up, which are always numbered, and the archers who will be standing at which target. It's a good idea to get to the tournament early, and check the target draw. Then you can set up your bow and gear behind the target you are going

to be shooting at, and you know where you are supposed to be.

## **Now I'm nervous. This seems like a lot to remember!**

I won't lie: the first time you will be very nervous. It won't be easy. You probably won't shoot that well because you're so nervous. The first tournament is hard for everyone.

But that's okay. With practice, you'll get used to tournaments and the way they're run. Remember you're not alone. You can always ask another archer – they are always happy to help. Hopefully with practice the more tournaments you do, the less nervous you'll be and the better you'll shoot. Even archers who have been to hundreds of tournaments get nervous before a major tournament!

## **Handy Checklist:**

Stuff to bring:

- Bow
- Arrows (named)
- Uniform, or whites
- Completed entry form with start times
- Wet weather gear
- Hot weather gear
- Drink bottle and snacks
- Quiver, chest guard (if you have one), bow stand, bow case
- You might, in your bow case, have spares – string, fletches, nocks, arrows – in case of emergency gear failure
- Cleaning cloth or small towel
- Note book and pencil

When you get there:

- Check Target draw
- Set up bow
- Get bow/arrows inspected
- Put your pencil in your quiver
- Check gear again (I've known people to forget to put on their button plunger)
- Start shooting!