

13. Instructing Women in Field Archery

Although there are more similarities between women and men than differences, it is important to understand these differences and the role they play in helping women enjoy our sport. Women can have a slighter build than men of the same age, therefore may have a shorter draw length; they also carry their weight mainly in the lower part of the body which gives them a lower centre of gravity. Women may have less muscle development in their upper body and can be more flexible than a man of the same age and similar build.

The differences should be considered when helping female archers choose their equipment. They may need lower poundage bows, and like men need appropriate draw length and arrows spined to match.

Men and women share similar challenges in Field archery and can enjoy the same level of involvement. Women primarily participate in sport for the same reasons as males do; for exercise, the social aspect, as well as competition.

Unfortunately in many countries field archery is still seen as a predominantly male sport, based on the misconception of having to be strong to use a bow, while in some countries archery is associated with hunting. As a club member you have probably noticed that there are fewer females than males in your club.

As an instructor you will have to take these factors into account just as you consider cub and junior archers as minorities within your club and within the sport in general. These minority groups all have their own needs and you have to be mindful of them.

Girls from the age of approximately ten years start to develop differently to their male counterparts of the same age. Up until this time young boys and girls are basically built the same with the same amount of strength for their age.

However as young girls develop the hormonal changes which take place change the shape of their bodies which you as an instructor need to consider:

- Hips
 - o Broadening of the hips can result in a lower centre of gravity which can increase balance for some women
- Arms/ Shoulder
 - o Women can be narrower in the shoulders, some also having a shorter arm length. This can mean that's some women have a shorter draw length than men of the same age.
- Upper and lower body strength
 - o Most women have less muscle on the back and chest. They often have an imbalance of upper and lower body strength. This can mean that women generally use bows which are proportionally lower in poundage than males of the same age.
- Build
 - o Women can be shorter and lighter than men of the same age and height.
- Flexibility
 - o Greater joint flexibility can cause the elbow joint of most juniors and some adult females to be more prominent when they hold the bow. More time may be needed

to help with rotating the elbow and an arm guard should be carefully positioned when first instructing your new female archer.

- Chest
 - o When working with male or female archers with a larger chest, the string should be brought back to the side of the chest, to prevent or reduce string interference with body or clothing. It may be fitting to use a chest guard, especially for recurve and longbow shooters.
- Pregnancy
 - o While pregnant women should be physically active, they should adjust the type of physical activity to accommodate the increasing size of the baby. Pregnant women should seek regular medical advice to ensure safe physical activity levels.

Equipment selection

As an instructor you will have to take the physical differences of your women athletes into consideration when helping them choose the correct equipment. There are many great bows around these days that are specifically designed for archers with shorter draw length and lower poundage requirements. Be mindful of your archer's ability and try and match to the bow to their capabilities. For all archers, equipment that is too heavy to pull back and too cumbersome, as well as arrows that are too heavy and over spined will only make it more difficult for any archer to achieve.

Conclusion

Remember to be aware of both similarities and differences between men and women. Support and nurture your coaching relationship with your female athletes and provide information on the correct equipment appropriate for the physical ability of the female athlete. The time you spend now will help to keep our female archers in our sport.