

Technical Bulletin - Commanding the Follow Through

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As we close the door on 2020, it seems appropriate to discuss the technical step of follow through. Almost every movement skill or sport has a concept of follow through; the analogy of follow through often applies to finishing a task or completing a goal. In archery, there is a follow through whether you are talking about compound, recurve or barebow. I have often heard coaches and athletes refer to follow through as a reaction of what we do before the release in the shot process, and because of that mindset I think that follow through is often misunderstood.

Conscious vs. Subconscious

Before we talk about the physical explanation of what is going on, let's briefly look at the focus at this point of the shot process. Just before following through, we have expansion and release. The release is a very critical point of the shot process. A lot can happen at that point and a lot of times our brain can get in the way. For those of you who have taken Mental Management 101 and 102, you know that to keep our brain and thoughts out of the way, we need to have a focal point during this time so we can release the string subconsciously. We can release the string more consistently and naturally each shot if we can do it subconsciously. To do this, we need to occupy our conscious mind with a focal point. Follow through, however, is not a subconscious movement. It is something we need to make sure we complete each shot and to do that, we need to focus on completing the follow through each shot. For some archers this may involve focusing on the feeling of the final follow through position after expansion begins. For others, it may involve focusing on a cue or phrase to get to the end of the follow through.

Follow through should be a continuation of the movement in the same direction of expansion. So instead of the archer consciously expanding, then releasing, and then following through, the archer should expand to the end of follow through and release happens subconsciously during the expansion to follow through.

Expansion Starts the Follow Through

The follow through and degree to which we complete the follow through has a drastic impact on how the arrow will fly. Technically, the archer must continue the movement of expansion to the end of the follow through position.

How we expand, release, and follow through has a big impact on the feeling of our back tension. If our follow through ends at a different position each time, we could very well put a different amount of force on the arrow each shot resulting in inconsistencies.



In our Level 4-NTS course we always ask coaches, "What is the greatest moment of back tension?" Many coaches respond, "at holding" or, "when the clicker clicks" or, "at release". However, if our greatest amount of back tension feeling was during one of these situations, that would mean we lose some amount of back tension through release which could result in a collapse. By getting to the end of the follow through position, our scapulae should be closest together at that point and therefore, should result in the greatest feeling of back tension.

Summary

We have to rethink follow through and how we finish the shot process. Follow through cannot simply be a reaction, or we run the risk that the archer will collapse and lose back tension through the critical instant of the shot process. Focusing on commanding the follow through to the end position is the key to finishing the shot consistently and with the greatest amount of back tension which will allow the archer to execute a clean shot each time.