



# INDOOR CHALLENGE

It's that time of the year when archery clubs bid goodbye to the great outdoors and say hello to sports halls. Andrew Smith tells beginners how to cope

**F**or most of us summer is officially over. The shooting ground has had its last cut, the nights are drawing in and the carefully prepared lines are fading away. The last outdoor club session has passed by and everyone is about to start shooting indoors. For those who took a beginners' course in the summer this will be their first experience of indoor shooting.

## Enjoy

My advice to you is firstly to enjoy it, and ignore all the moans and groans from some of the more established members. Shooting indoors is generally cramped,

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with little space to set up your equipment, so only take what you need. It can be a bit cosy on the shooting line, so if you currently load your arrow with the bow horizontal you will need to adopt a more vertical style or you will interfere with the archers either side of you.

## Equipment

At this time of year you may also overhear conversations about setting your bow up for indoor use. Fear not, as the kit you have been using outdoors is completely suitable for indoor use. The only real change is that some archers exchange expensive

carbon arrows for fatter aluminium arrows. These are cheaper to replace, and some hope the bigger diameter will gain them the odd point or two when they cut the dividing line.

## Arrow Damage

Indoor group sizes will be smaller and the potential for arrows to hit each other in the target is greater. Damage to arrows in the target is an accepted hazard in indoor shooting, and if you do damage another archer's arrow in the course of normal shooting you will not be expected to stump up the cash for a replacement.



**Use the time to improve**

Shooting indoors is also a totally different challenge from outdoor shooting. It's warm and dry – especially on a cold January night – the targets are closer, although smaller, and you have a better opportunity to meet some of your fellow club mates who spent most of the summer up the other end of the ground, shooting the longer distances.

Above all, shooting indoors can be a great leveller. The draw weight of your bow is not so critical and, without the weather to throw you off balance, you can concentrate on improving your shots. The better you get the smaller your group sizes.

**New rounds**

Indoor shooting also introduces you to rounds that you will not have shot outdoors. The most popular are: Portsmouth five dozen at 20yd on a 60cm face, 10 zone scoring with a maximum score of 600; FITA 18 five dozen at 18m on a 40cm face or a triple face (three faces in a vertical line with a scoring arrow in each); the FITA 25 five dozen at 25m on a 60cm face, 10 zone scor-



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ing (where halls are big enough); and finally a quirky round called a Worcester shot at 20yd – the target face is black with a white centre, scoring is 5.4.3.2.1 and again five dozen arrows are shot. In all instances, and to reduce arrow damage, three arrows are shot per end, except for the Worcester where you shoot five arrows each end.

**Handicaps and classifications**

The indoor season has its own classification and handicap system. The GMB to Third Class are replaced with A to E, and handicaps are calculated independently from the outdoor season. One question that often crops up is whether the indoor handicap is comparable to the outdoor one. You will find you have a better handicap score indoors than outside, mainly because the weather and distances have less of an effect.

**Postal leagues**

To keep the interest going through the darker months, clubs register for indoor postal leagues competing against other

locally based or national archery clubs. These are shot on specific club nights and everyone is encouraged to shoot and put in a score. Usually the top five scores count, but as there are many divisions and bow styles, clubs do enter more than one team so though you may not make the first team there is every opportunity to make the second, third or even fourth. This is also a great way to monitor your progress, to see your name on a score sheet, and an opportunity to measure your performance against similar archers in your county or the UK.

**Try an open tournament or two**

If you have not attended an open tournament then the indoor season is an ideal time to try it. Time is one of the most common excuses for not entering tournaments. This is no excuse as indoor rounds are only 66 arrows including sighters, and local tournaments fit in two to three sessions in the day. Excluding double rounds, only the first session you shoot counts towards the results so the choice is yours, you can get up early

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**The new Damage indoor practice face - ideal for spreading boss ware and reducing risk of arrow damage**

and be home for the afternoon or get up late and shoot the second or third session. There are no rules to say that you cannot enter more than one session if you wish – this is down to the organiser and the shooting line spaces available. However, only your first score will count, and your second score will usually be better because you will have had at least 66 sighters.

As you can see, there are many opportunities to make the indoor season varied and enjoyable while improving your form and stamina ready for the outdoor season.

