

# Cash for Golds

Getting your own bow can help improve your score as well as your technique, but it can be daunting for a first-time buyer. **Andrew Smith** continues his guide to getting into archery with some advice on buying your first bow

**W**hilst I agree that new archers should wait until they have finished their initial training before buying anything, discussions arise around how long an archer should wait after finishing the course before purchasing their equipment. Many clubs, however, will hire out club equipment to new archers for a period of time, allowing them to continue shooting whilst deciding what to do.

Timing really boils down to what you want out of archery. If all you want to do is to fling some arrows on a Sunday afternoon then it's not so critical, but if you want to gain a handicap, classification and perhaps enter the odd competition, then having your own kit correctly matched to you will see you progress much quicker than archers that continue to shoot with club equipment. The main reason for this is consistency and continuity – with your own kit your progress is down to you, and there is a world of difference between a wooden club trainer bow used for teaching and an intermediate bow.

## Cost

Archery is, unavoidably, an equipment-based activity. As a rough guide, a typical brand-new complete recurve set-up including all the accessories will be around £300 to £350



(compounds are more expensive, at around £750). Obviously you can spend a lot more than this, but equipment in this price bracket will offer you a set-up that will be consistent from shot to shot, allowing you to enjoy shooting and improve your technique.

## Where to buy

My advice would always be to buy from a recommended archery dealer. You'll get good

advice and the equipment supplied will be suitable, in that the bow will be the correct length, the draw weight will be comfortable, and the arrows will match you and the bow. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the bow and accessories will be set up correctly so that when you leave the shop it will be ready to shoot – even the factory settings might need some tweaking before a bow will fit you. I would advise taking a couple of hours to go archery shopping, as the only way you can get all this right is to be measured up correctly, shoot the equipment, and listen to what the dealer is saying – in most cases they are experienced archers and will want you to get the best equipment for your ability and style, which can take some time.

You can often find fellow club archers with equipment to sell, and providing it is right for you then you can save a few pennies. However, the onus of setting it all up is down to you and you may require lots of help from coaches and other club members. With regards to arrows it is often unlikely that they will be suitable, because lots are cut to specific draw lengths and have had changes made to the spine and point weight by the previous shooter. If you are buying from the internet, seek advice from your club coach. It's possible to get a bargain,



but quality can be much less certain.

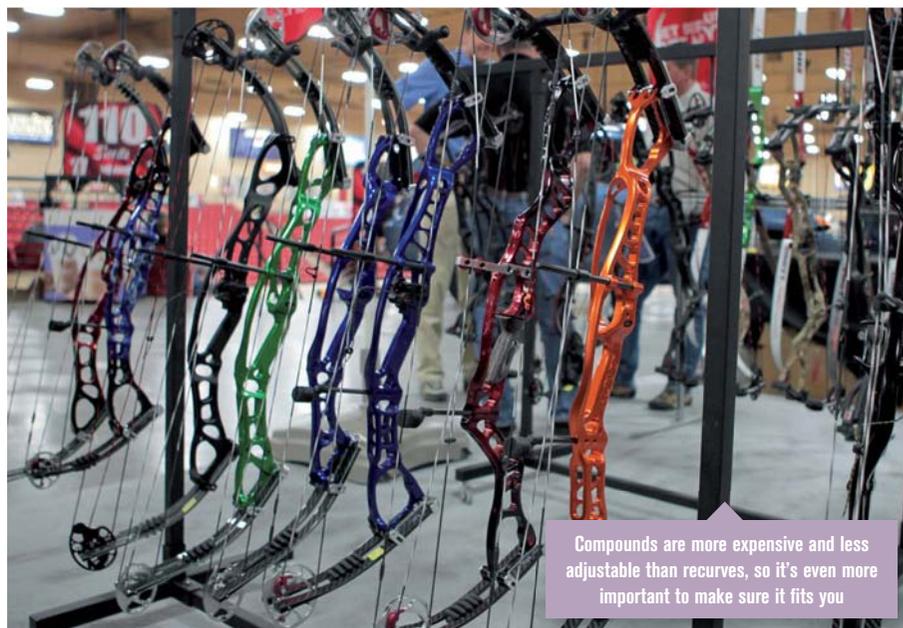
Finally, some archery companies do offer bow hire schemes with the opportunity to buy the equipment afterwards. This can be a good way to get your own bow, especially if you are unsure if archery is for you, your club does not loan equipment or the option of spreading the cost over a period of time is an attractive one.

## What to buy

Firstly, you have to decide what type of archery you wish to do; recurve, compound and longbow are the three most popular options. Then you need to have an idea of the primary discipline you will be shooting – target or field are the easier paths to follow in the early days, although if you live in the right area or are prepared to travel, longbow archers have options such as roving marks and distance shooting.

However, don't worry too much about this at this stage as most target equipment can be used for multiple disciplines. Even the longbow does not hold you back from varying your shooting, but some dedicated field bows and short axle compound bows will limit your options.

Archery equipment is often a collection of commodities and it's easy to go online and buy them. Unfortunately, it is how you put all the components together that is important and this is where many new and even some experienced archers fall down. You cannot really go wrong if you stick initially to branded equipment, but there are two terms you still need to understand if you are buying a recurve bow. ILF (International Limb Fit) and HPMS (Hoyt Paralever Mounting System) are terms recurve archers need to know:



Compounds are more expensive and less adjustable than recurves, so it's even more important to make sure it fits you

these are the two most common limb fittings to attach the limbs to the riser, and for the past 20 years most manufacturers have used ILF. The simple design allows risers and limbs to be mixed and matched between manufacturers. HPMS is a proprietary system developed by Hoyt on all their new risers, and the recent success of HPMS on the international circuit means that more and more manufacturers are producing products with this fitting. The bottom line is if you go for ILF you have a lot more choice – but an archery dealer can give you opportunity to try both to find out which you prefer.

Compound bow designs are proprietary to each manufacturer, so the most important checks are to ensure that it is not too heavy, both in terms of the draw weight and mass weight, and that the draw length is correct and comfortable or it can be adjusted – compound bows don't work the same way as recurve bows and an incorrect draw length can make the bow hard or impossible to shoot properly.

## Arrows

These really are the most important items in your tackle box; they have to match your bow, draw length and bow weight to give you the best chance of hitting the middle. They may all look the same but if the bendiness or 'spine' is wrong they will not fly accurately. You may have already experienced this at your club if your arrows are different each lesson.

Again, an archery shop is the easiest place to go to get this right, but some experienced club coaches can offer advice. For your first set you don't need to push the boat out, as a good set of about eight correctly matched aluminium arrows will cost around £38.00

and they can easily be replaced if shafts get bent or broken.

## Accessories

There are many wonderful accessories available in all shapes and sizes – some you need from day one and others that can be acquired later. Accessories that will make your life easier, including the obvious armguard and finger tab, are a bow stand, quiver, bow case or backpack, and a bow square or bracing height gauge – more on which in a future issue.

In conclusion, buying your first equipment can be quite daunting; the most important advice I can give is that wherever you source your equipment, you do your utmost to ensure that it is right for you and not anyone else, and you get it set up correctly ☺

## Some common mistakes

**Recurve:** The bow is the wrong length for your draw length; the mass weight of the handle is too heavy; draw weight of the bow is too hard or too easy to draw back efficiently. Another issue that can crop up is that right-handed bow is purchased when the archer is left-handed, or vice versa.

**Compound:** In addition to the problems that can occur with buying recurves, the two most common mistakes for first-time compound buyers to make are that the draw weight is too heavy and/or the draw length cannot be adjusted to suit you.

**Arrows:** The most common error is that quite simply they are the wrong spine.



Recurve risers come in all shapes and colours, but remember to check both the limb fitting and handedness before buying one