

## ASK BILL

With the indoor season just around the corner I would like to continue the discussion from last month on draw length and talk about the effect it has on accuracy.

Last month the question and answer was about how to determine what draw length bow to buy or how to determine your draw length. I talked about the Wing Span method that gets you really close and then small adjustments can be made to your form as needed.

I learned about the Wing Span method for determining draw length at the NFAA shooters and coaching school a little over two years ago. When the instructor checked the actual draw length I was shooting and compared it with my Wing Span draw length they were the same—28  $\frac{3}{4}$  inches. From a coaching perspective, a much more important thing I learned at the school was why and how improper draw length hinders accuracy, especially if it is too long. I came home from the shooters school and set up a bow 2 inches too long for me and shot it to see what it was like. When I first pulled it back it actually felt pretty *comfortable*; different, but comfortable. The real surprise came when I tried to hold on the target and shoot. I could not hold that longer draw bow anywhere near as steady as when I shoot at the proper draw length. The longer draw might feel *comfortable* to you but it does not help accuracy. Too long of draw hinders accuracy by not allowing your skeleton to line up properly for consistent shooting and you end up depending on muscles instead of your skeletal system. This goes against the idea of relaxing as many muscles as possible which is the real key to holding steady.

The term *holding steady* sounds like it is something you do by consciously tensing or tightening up your *holding muscles* really tight so as not to let the bow or sight move. Actually, *holding steady* is accomplished by using proper form and then relaxing as many muscles as possible. If your draw length is not correct you cannot use the required proper form and relax the muscles.

When you shoot a draw length that is too long you have to make the distance from your bow hand to your release hand longer than normal so it fits the bow. This is done by pushing or extending your bow shoulder forward and/or anchoring farther back with your release hand. When you extend your bow shoulder you will be using muscles to hold that shoulder in that extended position. The use of these muscles will cause more bow movement than if they were relaxed.

And that is one reason you may want to shorten your draw length if it is more than about  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch longer than indicated from the Wing Span method of determining draw length. Some other reasons you don't want to shoot too long of draw length are string interference with your bow arm, your chest or your face and the lack of a consistent anchor because your release hand is floating somewhere behind your jaw. It would be difficult for me to describe here the correct bow shoulder position so I will not attempt it but will be glad to show you in person if you want. Just ask when you see me.

Over Please

I am not saying you cannot shoot well with too long of draw length because with enough time and practice some miraculous feats can be accomplished. However, unless you devote several hours a day to shooting then you would be better off shooting with proper draw length.

Some people don't want to shorten their draw length because at the shorter draw length their bow will be slower. Bow speed should be secondary to shooting small groups and having those groups in the center of whatever target you are shooting. This reminds me of an incident around 25 years ago at a field archery tournament. It was in the days when PSE bows were thought to be the fastest bows made and Astro Bows was proving to the other bow companies that tournaments could be won with 2 wheel bows. Also, bows with two wheels were slower than bows with four wheels. The shoot was over for the day and we were waiting for the awards. A PSE pro shooter walked up to an Astro pro shooter and asked him if all his arrows had come down yet. We all laughed and then the Astro shooter told the PSE shooter he didn't care if the PSE shooter missed quicker. Who do you think won the tournament?

Good luck with your hunting and best of luck this indoor season.

Thanks, Bill Schuh.