

By Larry Wise

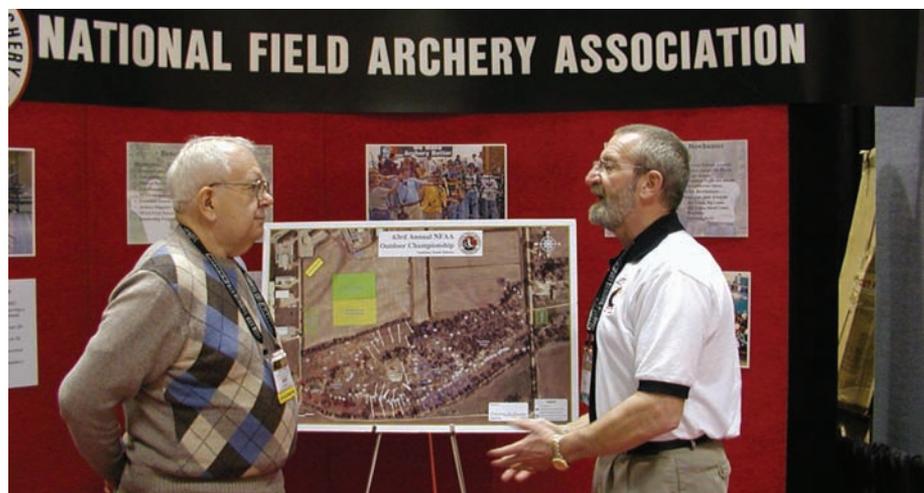
Field Archery's New Home

Back in 1978, I was shooting well but wanted to shoot higher scores so I was motivated to travel. Those who were shooting the highest scores didn't live close to me so I knew that if I wanted to get better I'd have to go find them, shoot with them and learn from them. Not only did I find good shooters like Jack Cramer, Mike Leiter and Ron Walker, I made life-long friends. And together with my fellow learners and a little luck we got to be really good shooters and top competitors.

We competed fiercely against one another often shooting an indoor round for the high stakes of a soda. Sometimes we shot for the "Championship Of The Universe" - - although our universe wasn't very big at the time. But it got bigger. And in those days to get bigger meant that we competed at the NFAA Mid-Atlantic Field Sectional and at the Outdoor Field Nationals. Field shooting was what the best did to prove themselves; it was then - and remains - the ultimate test of an archer's skill, endurance and mental tenacity.

We also traveled to Las Vegas; that was my first big trip to shoot archery for a sponsor, Jennings Compound Bows. The night before the tournament someone stole my bow from the Jennings booth and I was shocked in disbelief. I borrowed equipment and shot anyway - didn't do so well but I got smarter about taking care of my equipment. I also got smarter about shooting form through this high-pressure shooting format.

I quickly learned that to compete in any sport you have to get smarter and that brings me to this article. My friends and I worked awfully hard back in the 80s to tune our bows and arrows. We also worked hard at



During the ATA Show, M.J. Rogers (at right) explains how the new Easton Sports Development Foundation Center and NFAA Office in Yankton, South Dakota, is designed to serve all of archery. The 75-acre site picture stands in the background. (All photos for this column were supplied by Rogers and Paul Davison.)

becoming better shooters. There was no one there to guide us, no books available to explain anything until Al Henderson's "Understanding Winning Archery" was published in 1983. There were very few coaches who knew anything about shooting the compound bow with a release aid - we learned "on the job" so to speak.

Trial-and-error was the mode of operation and when you went into a slump it took awhile to get out. Many quit instead of sticking it out until they figured out what needed fixing and how to fix it. I remember one good shooter from around 1981 that shot some really high rounds at field nationals but when that particular bow broke he never got himself back together again . . . and quit.

It isn't like that today. There are coaches available to help those having problems and, even more important, to help beginners learn "how to shoot" properly from the first arrow. There are books, videos and DVDs

that help you do it yourself if you're that kind of learner. And there's the new NFAA/Easton Center for Archery Excellence in Yankton, South Dakota.

As a career public school math teacher I value education; you have to work hard to get good at anything but if you work "smarter" you'll get to the top faster and stay there longer. And that's what the new center is all about - working smarter at archery. Its purpose is four-fold: first, it provides a facility for training archers how to shoot; secondly, it provides a venue for archers to compete; thirdly it provides an office complex for the NFAA to administer the business end of archery and, lastly, it provides space for an archery museum so we can see our past and use it to help set our future course.

Bruce Cull, NFAA President, elaborated on this in an interview I was able to do with him at the recent ATA Show in Indianapolis. "The big picture for us is to do three major things.

First have a headquarters building for doing the administration of the National Field Archers Association. Second, through the cooperation of the Easton Sports Development Foundation is to have an indoor facility to house a twenty-five meter FITA range and classrooms. We also have an outdoor 90-meter FITA range that will enable us to reach a whole other demographic area that we haven't been able to get into until this point. Thirdly, of course, we will have field and 3-D ranges for practice and competition."

I asked Bruce what he sees as his role in the new center. He responded by saying "My role is primarily that of promoter. We have to get the word out to our local colleges and university. We have 95,000 K-12 school students within a bus drive of our center so we have to be sure they take advantage of it. There are also the regular bowhunters and target archers in the area that can make use of the facility."

Bruce also pointed out that because of Yankton's location in southeast South Dakota there are three other states that can use the facility. Some of these uses include bowhunter education programs and instructor training for those programs as well as state and regional level tournaments. The new indoor space will also be host to local shows and various kinds of receptions.

Another feature of the center is

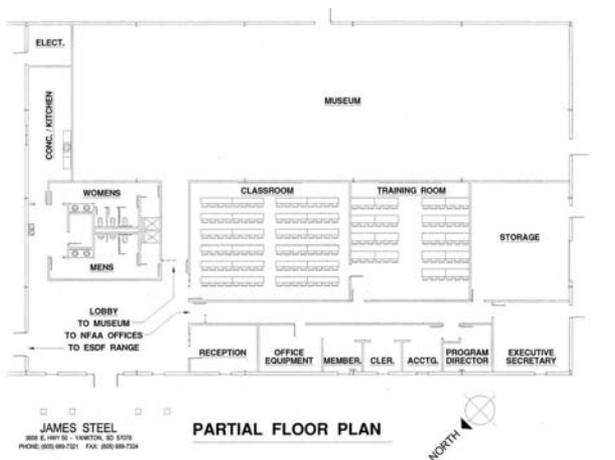


The indoor range was constructed over the spring and summer last year. The large, free-span area will be used to host a wide variety of activities other than indoor archery such as local sport shows, parties and wedding receptions.

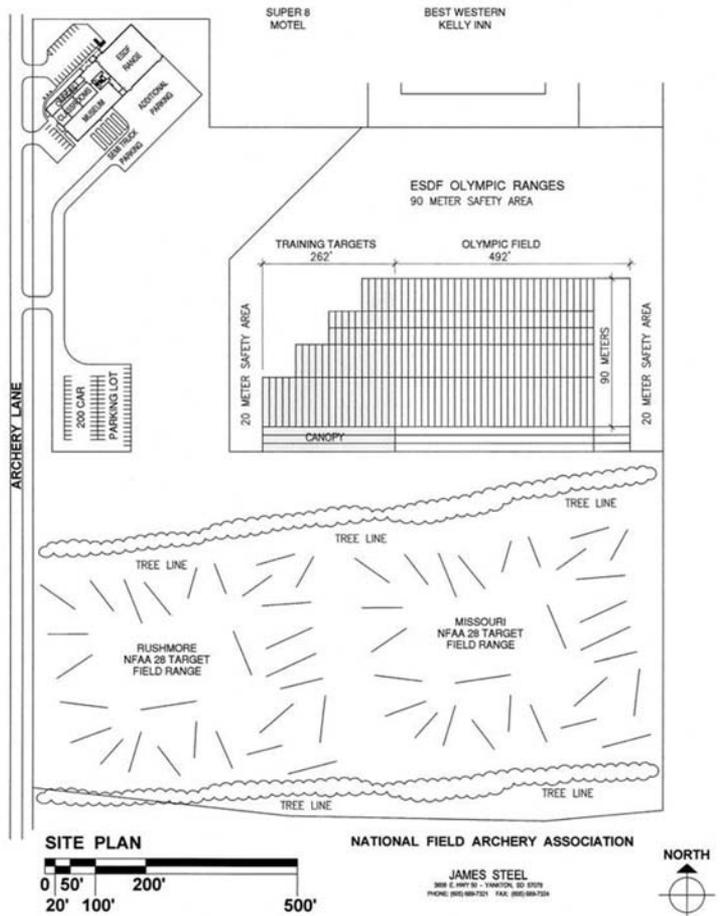
the museum space. Bruce explained, "Our board made the decision to add 5,000 square-feet of space for a museum. Right now it is unfinished cold storage but when we get the necessary funds we can use it to show not only the history of the NFAA but of

archery in general. Lots of people have bows and other equipment that are museum quality and can donate them to help show our history. That will take some time but we'll eventually have it."

RIGHT: An architect's drawing of the building and property site show how two of the field ranges, the FITA target ranges and the actual building location relate.



This floor plan shows the layout of the NFAA offices, classrooms, museum space and storage rooms. Plans for the museum will take some time to implement but, when finished, it will offer a look at how the NFAA and archery in general reached this point in time.





Although the landscaping was not complete when this picture was taken you can see the impressive front of the Easton Sports Development Foundation Archery Center. The total project cost over \$3 million involving funding from the NFAA, Easton, city, county and state government.

EASTON'S ROLE

Since the name on the new building includes "Easton Sports Development Foundation Center For Archery Development" I asked Bruce what role Easton will play in the future of the center. He responded by saying "Easton's role will be to provide expertise in two financial aspects of the center. Number one is going to be through a scholarship program. Number two is going to be in providing a full-time level four coach. Part of our agreement with Easton is to have a coach on staff to give adequate training to anyone wanting to use the center."

Relative to the scholarship plan Bruce said "Our plan from day-one was to generate enough revenue from the center to go beyond covering costs so that we could provide \$50,000 in scholarships each year. We, along with Jim Easton would like part of that to go toward recurve archer training so we can increase the pool of archers available for the Olympic style shooting. Obviously, if we get them at an earlier age we can develop more and better archers. We'll do that and every other possible form of archery training. The whole idea is to perpetuate the sport of archery."

CENTER'S ORIGIN

I was curious about how the new center came into being so I asked Bruce about that. He filled me in on

the origins of the idea, "For over 25 years the NFAA has talked about moving the headquarters out of California so we could be more geographically centered. The idea was not new but when someone walked into the office in Redlands and made a sizeable offer to buy the facility we started thinking seriously about moving. Since I'm from Yankton I had a bias for this area, I'll make no bones about that, and since we had an offer in the upper six-digit range we started looking and found matching support in this community.

Bruce went on to explain who was involved. "We brought in local government agencies on economical development, the state governor's office, the state department of revenue, the state department of tourism and others to help us. The Boy and Girl Scouts were involved, the hunter ed and bowhunter ed agencies were involved and on and on. The state and community came together with an incentive program that gave us 40 acres of land if we built a building and held some tournaments here. That made it almost a no-brainer. So that's how it came together."

I was also curious about the financial package that is involved. Bruce related the following: "The overall budget of this program is about \$3.7 million. The NFAA put in about \$.75 million, the ESDF (Easton)

put in about \$.5 million and city, county and state put in the rest. A local car dealer gave us 15 acres of ground, which is a sizeable donation right there.

"We've also purchased an additional 20 acres making our total land about 75 acres, part of which will be made into a campground. The county will supply the infrastructure for the water and sewer so there will be space for people to camp during our tournaments and space to rent out otherwise. We have use of another 20 acres so that the project is about 100 acres. A lot has come together for this project including the 50 miles of bike trail – the trail was donated to the community by Tom Brokaw - linking our site to others in the area. Local schools and universities will use some of the large shooting field we have for soccer. This is going to be a multi-use complex to serve a wide range of groups beyond archery."

SHOOTING FACILITIES

During the ATA Show I was also able to talk with M. J. Rogers who is chairman of the NFAA Coaches Certification Committee. He began by describing some of the ranges that will be available for training and tournaments. "Our indoor range will be 30 lanes wide at a distance of 25-meters. The outdoor target range will be big



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enough to host 100 lanes and is about 100-meters by 200-meters in size. We also have four permanent 28 target field ranges that adjoin the target range. We have access to another 60 acres so we can put in another five or six ranges if necessary for a big tournament.

M.J. went on to say, “The building is about 28,000 square-feet in size with a classroom that seats 100 and another that seats 50 so that two different classes can be conducted at the same time. We’ll be able to host meetings and parties and have the help of inmates on a work-release program from the local minimum-security facility to help service the center, indoors and out. The office space is about a thousand square-feet and eventually there will be office space for the full-time coach on staff.”

I asked about training aids available and M.J. informed me that “there will be an overhead area in the indoor range where cameras can be used to film archers from all angles in order to fully assess their shooting form and make corrections. We’ll also have a full compliment of archery equipment to train those who have none. Easton will supply some of the funding for this venture as I’m sure Bruce told you.”

The part I’m looking forward to is the coaches training that will be available at the new center. M.J. filled me in on that, “We will have all levels of coaches training and certification available at the new center. We can

train summer camp instructors and others in the Basic Instructors Level and the Intermediate Instructors Level. Both of these are recognized by the NAA, the ASA as well as the NFAA. The newest certification that all three associations are working on now is the Community Coaches Certification. When it’s completed it will be the next step beyond the instructor level and the first step toward becoming an archery ‘coach’. As of now we have a CCC class scheduled for June, as well as a Pro Coach Certification Class, the next level beyond the CCC. Beyond that there are over 20 hunter education classes scheduled for the rest of this year. We’ll have a full slate of courses and training classes scheduled for 2010.”

THE NFAA MAGAZINE

For years, since 1984 in fact, the NFAA has published its own magazine, “Archery,” to showcase archery. The magazine features pictures and results from the most recent tournaments and articles by various authors on shooting form, hunting exploits and upcoming events.

One of Marihelen Roger’s duties as executive secretary is to see that the magazine gets published every other month. She has been editor of the magazine since 1997 and recently received the NFAA President’s Award for her outstanding work on behalf of the NFAA.

Not only does she edit the magazine she also runs the office. When I asked her what her involvement was in moving the office from California she



The NFAA was founded to promote field archery way back in the 1930s, so that makes the four permanent field ranges an important part of the new Center and property complex.

quickly replied “I was responsible for the physical move from California to South Dakota. We had to pack everything from our office and our home into trailers and then drive cross-country to Yankton. We then set up shop in a temporary office space until the new building was ready. Then we moved everything into the new space.”

I’ve helped move friends from one home to another but there was no rush to get it all set up and operating so I can understand how hard of a job it was to get the NFAA office operational within a day or two once they arrived in Yankton, South Dakota.

I had to ask her what is “better” about the new office area to which she replied, “We’re so much more visible here in the new center. We have local league shooters coming in to shoot, a gun show this weekend, bowhunter education students coming for training, Scouts and many other groups coming for training or information. Lots of people get to see us everyday – we didn’t have that in California with just an office.”

There are some others working at the new headquarters. Karla Michel and Natalie Vollmer do much of the day-to-day office work while Natalie’s husband, Tom, is the NFAA Bowhunting Chairman. Of course



The lobby of the NFAA office complex makes a bright welcome area for any arriving for business, tournaments or classes. This will also be the entrance used for the museum when it is completed.



Archers shoot in the newly opened 25-meter indoor archery range. Local, state and national level tournaments can be held here as well as, sport shows and parties.



Target archery competitions like this one at the new FITA range are held all over the world with many international team events. The US sends teams to all of these and, therefore, regional training facilities like the ESDF/NFAA Center are essential to our team's success and to our ability to host international competitions.

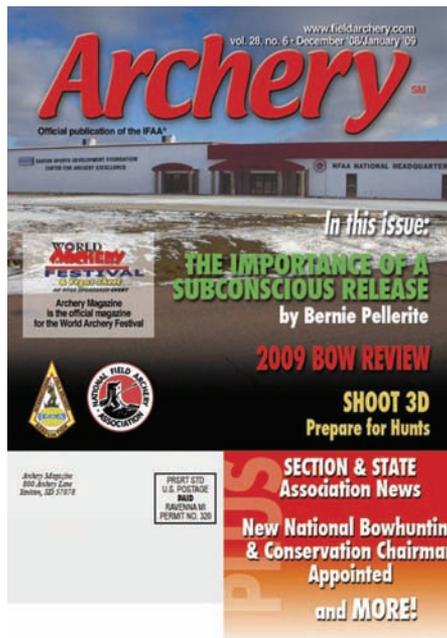
M.J. Rogers is the other full-time employee (I'm sure who the boss is here!).

The economy has had an effect on all of us so I asked Marihelen how it was affecting the NFAA. She told me, "The slow economy has not affected our registrations for the Las Vegas Tournament, they are actually running ahead of last year at this point. And the Louisville Indoor is running about the same as last year. Membership may be down about one or two percent but that's all. We're doing fine right now. One thing that is definitely up is the workload while we're still getting organized. And in the coming months we may have more work as the Easton Scholarship Program gets going."

CONCLUSION

Without question the NFAA workload is up but that's what they are supposed to be doing – building archery. The NFAA has been a big part of my archery career since I first stepped on a field archery course back in 1959. The opportunity that field archery offers anyone who takes up its challenge is, I feel, beyond measure and without an organization to keep it in front of us it wouldn't be there. Without the NFAA, a good archer couldn't measure his or her complete shooting ability.

The new NFAA/ESDF Center is the biggest step forward in archery that I remember. To have a place, one place, to do everything there is



To learn more about the NFAA and its new facility you can subscribe to the NFAA magazine, "ARCHERY". It's published bimonthly from the office in Yankton. Advertising rates are available at (605) 260-9279. Or call the office toll-free number (800) 811-2331.

to do in archery is absolutely fantastic. At one place we can shoot indoor archery rounds, outdoor 90-meter international and Olympic rounds, 3-D animal rounds and the ultimate-skill-testing field rounds. And get training for each if we need it.

The real challenge is for all of us to put this new center to use. As dealers you have an opportunity to tell lots of customers about the new center and get them to commit to using it. Yeah, it's a long way from many of you (it was designed to be a regional center) but it's available for everyone. Its especially available nation-wide for coaches training so spread the word – it's a great opportunity to get your local coaches certified so they teach proper techniques.

You can get them started by calling NFAA at (800) 811-2331. Or call NADA, National Alliance for the Development of Archery, at (352) 472-2388, to have a certified coach come to your location to present a coaches certification course.

I'm passionate about shooting any form of archery but especially field archery so it was easy to write this article promoting the new NFAA

Center. I can't wait to get there, shoot some field targets, train archer/athletes and begin teaching coaches in the new classrooms. I hope you join me there.

Keep well, shoot straight, and learn more!

Larry Wise

EDITOR'S NOTE: Larry's books are available from Larry Wise Archery, Rural Route #3, Box 678, Mifflintown, PA 17059 for \$11.95 + \$1.50 S & H. Titles available are "Tuning Your Compound Bow", "Tuning and Silencing Your Bowhunting System", "Tuning and Shooting Your 3-D Bow" and "Bow and Arrow: A Complete Guide". Larry is also available to conduct one and two day CoreArchery Academies on shooting form. To contact him by email, use larrywise3x19@embarq-mail.com. The phone number for Larry Wise Archery is (717) 436-9168.

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