

By Dale Karch & Todd Smith

Like a thief in the night, carbon arrows have been sneaking away with an ever-growing share of the traditional archery shaft and arrow market. And why shouldn't they?

The carbon arrows of today are among the finest projectiles ever shot from a stick and string. They hold exacting tolerances for weight, spine, and straightness. They're more durable than any other shafting material ever produced, and with the "wood-look" patterns now available, they are very appealing to the aesthetic demands of traditional archers everywhere. With so many new people entering the sport of traditional archery, the need for quality, low-maintenance shafting is huge. With carbons, there's no need for straightening, sanding, painting, or sealing like on wood shafting. You just assemble and shoot. We predict it won't be long till carbon arrows own the lion's share of the total shaft and arrow market, including the traditional archery market.

Which types of carbon shafts are the most popular with traditional archers? What are the unique needs of the traditional archer/bowhunter? Which styles sell best to traditional archers/bowhunters? Read on for the answers.

Everyone loves wood. Come on, you know it. The warm, natural look of wood is hard to resist. After all, if

## Carbon Arrows For The Traditional Archer

you're shooting a beautiful custom wood bow, it only makes sense that you'd like your arrows to compliment the beauty of the bow, doesn't it? The wood-look carbon shafts out-sell all other patterns by a margin of about ten to one. For selling lots of carbons remember, "Wood is Good".

Speaking of good looks, we need to insert a bit of an aside here. For carbon arrows to look "traditional", you'll have to have feathers. Vanes just aren't going to cut it for most of these guys. Most of them are shooting off the shelf anyway, so vanes

wouldn't work even if they wanted to use them because they won't fold down as they pass the shelf. We find that 5-inch Trueflight feathers in the shield-cut and in left wing sell the best. White is by far the number one selling color. To best service the traditional market, make sure you stock at least a few natural feathers. We all know the old adage, "You can't sell from an empty wagon". Availability is a major concern. If you can't replenish your stock when you need to, what good does it do you to carry that "non-delivering" brand? We all



*Carbon Express weight tubes are an easy way to increase your arrow's total mass weight. These precision plastic tubes slip inside your shafts.*

Brought to you by:



## 3Rivers Archery

WORLD'S LARGEST TRADITIONAL/  
PRIMITIVE ARCHERY SUPPLIER

Welcome to the profitable world of traditional/primitive archery. As your best source for traditional archery supplies, we offer thousands of top quality, in stock, ready to ship products. We will help you determine which products meet your needs and will help you succeed. Orders normally ship within 24 hours.

For your FREE dealer packet, please contact us at: 260.587.9501 or visit us on-line at: [3RiversArchery.com](http://3RiversArchery.com)



**Sandie Karch put a Gold-Tip carbon arrow completely through this nice Kudu bull with her 46# Tomahawk Bow.**

know the answer to that one. It doesn't. A good rule to follow is, "Find your carbon arrows in an attractive wood pattern and make sure the supply is available 'on demand' and is sustainable."

The heavier the better! Traditional bows shoot arrows that are on the heavy side best. This has historically been the largest obstacle, (and still is a concern), with shooters in traditional circles who wanted to try carbons early on. Fortunately, the carbon arrow manufacturers now offer heavier shafts that can be shot safely from traditional bows. How heavy is heavy? Look for a minimum of 8-10 grains per inch of arrow length. Think about it. We all know we're not supposed to dry fire our bows. Yet some archers make a conscious effort to shoot the lightest arrow they possibly can, banking on

the "speed kills" theory. They're right too. Speed achieved like that does kill. It kills your bow! The dynamic recovery of the limbs on longbows and recurves casts heavier arrows better than ultra-light arrows. In other words, if the arrow does not weigh enough, it can't receive all of the potential energy the limbs are attempting to transfer. This leaves an excess of energy in the limbs and creates an unpleasant "thump" (or "slam" depending on the situation) when the limbs come home. The lighter the arrow set-up, the more like a dry fire the shot becomes. With light arrows the shot experience becomes harsh, the stress on the bow and string is dangerous, and your arrow ends up with much less

penetrating power. Sounds like a bit of a "lose-lose" situation doesn't it? Tests have confirmed the fact that longbows and recurves shoot heavier arrows best. When targeting the traditional segment, stock your shelves with heavy carbon arrows.

Another feature to look for in carbon arrows is a 5/16" outside diameter. Most wood arrows have a diameter of 11/32 or 23/64 but getting the arrow closer to the center of a bow helps with arrow flight and accuracy. This alone is a great selling point.

You may be wondering if any one company answers all of these needs. The good news is that we've found not one but two! The tip of the hat goes to Carbon Express and Gold Tip.

Carbon Express offers their ever popular, "Heritage" series, in a rich wood-look finish, available in three shaft spines that will match up perfectly with almost any stick bow made today. The 150 series for lighter bows (roughly 35-55) weighs in at 10.0 grains per inch. Their 250 series for mid-range bows (roughly 55-75) weighs 11.0 grains per inch, and their 350 series for heavier bows (roughly 75-95) weighs 12.0 grains per inch. These weights are all well within the acceptable norm for traditional equipment even before adding any after market weight systems. These shafts are nearly indestructible! We put some to the test up in the mountains of New Mexico and never had one fail. We bounced them off rocks and trees with no ill effects. The Carbon Express arrow is rugged quality. You can take our word on that.

Gold-Tip offers their best selling, "Traditional Hunter" series in three spines as well. Their 3555's (for lighter bows) weigh 8.6 grains per

***The Carbon Express "Heritage Series" is an excellent choice for the traditional market.***



Gold-Tip offers a nice "Traditional Hunter" series specifically for traditional shooters. Weight ranges from 8.6 to 11.5 grains per inch.



Steel inserts add more than just weight. They are stronger than aluminum, and allow the use of a traditional glue-on head on carbon arrows.



Brass inserts can instantly add 50-100 grains to your carbon arrows.

inch. Their 5575's (for mid-range bow weights) weigh in at 9.3 grains per inch, and their heavy spined 7595's (for heavier bows) weigh 11.5 grains per inch. Again, these are well within the desired weights for traditional equipment.

Are these Gold-Tips tough? Well, Sandie Karch, owner of 3Rivers Archery put one all the way through an African Kudu weighing about 1,000 pounds with a 46# Tomahawk longbow! They're tough enough for the real world.

Do you have any weight sets? No, not the dusty bench press and weights abandoned in your basement. There are now a multitude of

after-market weight accessories available for controlling the overall mass weight and even balance of your carbon arrows. Weight tubes, steel broadhead adapters, brass inserts, and other similar weighting systems are now available for carbon arrows.

Weight tubes are thin plastic tubes that slide inside the shafts and are commonly available in 2 and 3 grains per inch sizes. Solid steel broadhead adapters allow the use of glue-on broadheads, which are very familiar to the traditional bow hunters and are considerably stronger than the aluminum type and can themselves weigh up to 125 grains. They are an excellent choice for adding weight to your carbon arrows.

There is another popular weight-adding product offered by Keith Jabben's firm, Precision

Designed Products (PDP). It is an entire adjustable weight system comprised of weighted components that screw directly into special threaded inserts allowing you complete control of the total arrow weight. These components are available from 5 to 50 grain increments and can open a wide world of fine-tuning to the arrow shooting "crank" that lives for perfection in arrow flight.

Don't forget good old screw-in points. They are now available in weights up to 250 grains! What an easy way to increase your arrow weight and test your arrow flight. Just screw in a heavier point.

<http://www.trueflightfeathers.com>

# TRUEFLIGHT FEATHERS

**Fast, Forgiving and Accurate!**

Made in the USA

10 sizes, solid colors and a new Phase 3 Barred that's the most realistic ever! (Inquire at your distributor)

**TRUEFLIGHT**

MANUFACTURING COMPANY, INC.  
P.O. Box 1000  
MANITOWISH WATERS, WI 54545  
(715) 543-8451 • CALL DAY OR NIGHT  
email@trueflightfeathers.com

World Leader in Precision Feathers for Over 50 Years

Keith Jabben brought this model of the Adjustable Steel Speed Point to the 2005 ATA Show so dealers could see how easy it is to adjust points to weigh up to 500 grains. Reach PDP in Kansas at (620) 331-0333.





**Adding a heavier point, like this 190 grain Simmons Shark is an easy way to increase arrow mass-weight.**

From heavy points, to adapters, from weight tubes to weight systems, there are many ways for the modern traditional archer/bowhunter to customize their carbon arrows to match their bow type and hunting style. Spend some time investigating them, add them to your inventory,

and reap the rewards of selling high-margined accessories to traditional archers and bowhunters.

Did we save the best for last? What about price? As in most things, we have found that many of our customers who would like to try carbon arrows just can't bring themselves to pay the price. What do you do? We suggest looking into a brand's lower end shafts. The straightness and weight tolerances may not be quite as tight as their best shafting, but most folks will be OK with that since they know they aren't paying the big bucks. We find that once they try the lower end carbons, they normally like them so much that they upgrade to the top of the line models from then on. Another angle is to keep an eye out for closeouts, or quantity discounts that will allow you to get some carbons in that you can offer at very low "introductory" prices. Again, first we get customers in the door to try carbon arrows, and then once they try the shafts, they happily close it behind themselves for good.

There you have it, the secrets to supplying the traditional market with carbon arrows. Not overly complex but strategic nonetheless. Let them have "wood" finishes.



**Most traditional shooters will opt for the shield shape like the two right hand samples of these Trueflight Traditional Bronze Barred. Some will want to cut or burn their own feathers from full-length fletch (below), another option from Trueflight Manufacturing.**



Make sure the shafts are 5/16 inch in diameter and are heavy enough in mass weight. Offer at least a few choices of feathers. Stock up on some after-market weight systems, and keep it all in stock. Oh, you might want to shoot them yourself. They're great! It also gives you first hand insight to the ins and outs of the specific characteristics of each brand. Till next time, good shooting!

**ABOUT THE COLUMNISTS:** A former tool and die maker who is no stranger to precision work, Karch spent three years working full time as a bowyer before he and wife Sandie purchased 3Rivers Archery. Running the business has given him a unique perspective on the traditional side of the archery industry. Todd Smith lived in Alaska for several years and trained under master fletcher John Dodge, well known for making some of the finest cedar arrows every offered. From 1988 to now, Todd has been the "Right Hand Man" at the Ashley, Indiana distributor. ←

**3-D COVER SYSTEM**

**SHAGGIE®**

**GHILLIE**

**RANCHO SAFARI**  
[www.ranchosafari.com](http://www.ranchosafari.com)  
 P.O. BOX 691 • RAMONA, CA 92065  
**1-800-240-2094**