

How To Shoot People And Get Away With It: An Introduction to Combat Archery

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with grateful thanks to Baron Jibril ibn Ammar al-Fayyad 'al-Sayyid and Master Samuel Bump

SCA combat archery (CA) is a heavy weapons form used primarily in larger melee battles, such as those at Pennsic. Some melee battles at smaller events will include combat archery when there is enough room.

Combat archery can be your primary weapons form; in the East you do not need to qualify in any other forms in addition to CA. As such, you can be hit by other fighters, but generally speaking, if you surrender by declaring yourself dead, they will give you a “courtesy tap”. (Please take the tap so other archers don’t have to take the full strike.)

BASICS

Authorized combat archers need equipment: armor, weapons, and ammunition.

Minimum Armor:

- Helmet (14 gauge minimum recommended)
- Kidney protection
- Gorget
- Knee and elbow protection
- Groin protection for both men and women
- Demi/half gauntlets

Weapons:

Weapons are divided between light and heavy, based on their power. Light weapons can shoot fiberglass shafted ammunition, while heavy weapons shoot Siloflex ammunition.

Type of weapon	Light	Heavy
Handbows: longbows, recurve, horsebows	Maximum pull of 30# measured at 28”, fiberglass or Siloflex ammo	Maximum pull of 50# measured at 28”, Siloflex ammo only
CA crossbows: not always interchangeable with target crossbows	400-600 inch-pounds, fiberglass or Siloflex ammo	601-1000 inch-pounds, Siloflex ammo only

Ammunition:

- Fiberglass shafted arrows/bolts: fly better, more accurate, more expensive, only light weapons
- Siloflex: cheaper, can be fired from heavier crossbows and handbows

SAFETY:

Safety is uppermost in every combat archer’s mind while on the field. We tend to be more vigilant about where spectators are, who is around us and what is happening in a battle. One of the biggest things to remember is that our arrows and bolts bounce and bounce far, and that our ammunition, although designed for safety, can still be very dangerous to an unarmored target. The last thing we want is for someone who has wandered too close to the fighting to get hit by an arrow that has bounced off someone’s helmet or shield.

Keep in mind field of fire, ensuring that spectators are not within the range of your weapon and the direction of fire (if restricted by field configuration).

A top priority of all combat archers should be the care and condition of their equipment. Learn to inspect your bow or crossbow for possible issues that need to be repaired, and to inspect your own arrows and bolts before you take them to the marshals for official inspection. Look for loose blunts and APDs, cracking shafts and cracked APDs. These are very simple to spot and are usually easy to fix. No one wants to fire a missile and have the head fall off mid-flight.

TRAINING:

There are only about 20 CA marshals in the East Kingdom, so training can be difficult. There is a practice in Bhakail, and the monthly melee practice at the Police Athletic League (PAL) in Fall River MA allows CA indoors during the winter. Authorization must usually take place at an event to have the required CA and heavy marshals present.

Training is a bit different from standard target archery. Combat archers must learn to hit a moving target that may or may not be actively avoiding their shots. Target areas are limited, and many times hits are "ignored" because the fighter struck simply did not feel the impact. Combat archers learn to choose targets carefully to make sure the impact is felt. Prime target areas are the helmet grill (face), neck and upper chest area, and the armpit. Shooting someone in the back is not a legal shot and is technically against the rules.

CA EQUIPMENT SUPPLIERS

North Star Archery: http://www.northstararchery.com/SCA_combat_archery.html

Best place I have found to get ready to shoot & kits for CA arrows and bolts. They also have fiberglass bows.

Crossbow and Bolt: <http://crossbowandbolt.com/>

Basic combat crossbows set up for Siloflex. Also has kits if you want to build your own.

Attila's Archery: http://attilasarchery.com/shop/index.php?main_page=product_info&products_id=25

This is where the kingdom CA marshal purchased his horse bow. These are very nice bows you can customize and use for both target and combat archery. This is the bow he prefers over the fiberglass bows.

New World Arbalest: <http://www.crossbows.net/index.php>

Very nice crossbows and links to other suppliers for parts

ARMOR SUPPLIERS

For armor there are many vendors that have good pieces to choose from. Most important is your helmet. Plan to spend \$150 on a good starter helm.

Iron Monger Armory: <http://ironmongerarmory.com/>

Very well-made equipment at great price points

Aesir Metalwyrks: <http://www.aesirmetalwyrks.com/>

Icefalcon Armory: <http://store.fastcommerce.com/icefalcon/home.html>

Winter Tree Crafts: <http://www.wintertreecrafts.com/index.html>

You will find many people wearing their stainless steel gorgets

Dark Victory Armory: <https://darkvictory.com/>

Dark Victory is a good source for lightweight, HDPE gear, as well as some steel helmets. Quick turnaround.

Plastic Lamellar: <https://plasticlamellar.worldsecuresystems.com/index.html>

AUTHORIZATION

Sample CA Authorization questions:

- How can an archer declare him/herself dead?
- If a CA chooses not to yield, how does his opponent kill him?
- What are the legal targets for arrows and bolts?
- When does an arrow to the back constitute a valid hit?
- What is gleaning?
- When is gleaning allowed in the East Kingdom?
- When can you use arrows from a dead archer?
- What is the minimum safe distance to shoot from? (ie, when is a fighter too close to shoot?)
- What happens when a bow is struck by an arrow?
- How about a melee weapon or javelin?
- How about a siege weapon?
- What happens when a quiver is struck by an arrow? Melee weapon? Siege weapon?
- What is the minimum armor requirements for CA in the East Kingdom?
- What is the maximum draw weight of a handbow with shafted munitions? Crossbow?
- What is the maximum draw weight of a handbow equipped with siloflex arrows? Crossbow?
- What is the minimum draw weight of a handbow and crossbow?
- What is the maximum length of an arrow?
- How can you visually tell the difference between a heavy bow and a light bow?
- Can a light bow shoot heavy ammo?
- Can a heavy bow shoot light ammo?
- When can you pick up dropped ammo?
- If you hit an opponent, and they do not take the shot, what do you do next?
- At what calibration do you not have to take a hit?
- Who determines if your shot is good?
- What do you do on a hold? Medical (extended) hold?
- When can you nock your arrow/bolt, or span your crossbow?

Skills test:

- Is the archer somewhat accurate?
- Does the archer stop shooting when a marshal or spectator is behind the target?
- Receive a "good" shot to the head and torso.
- Does the archer panic when charged?
- How does the archer yield?
- Demonstrate being dead.

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