

"ARCHERS, JE VOUS SALUE!"



L to R: Clara, Stéphanie and Marie-Hélène

Has it ever occurred to you, on Sundays, once the competition is over, with your arrows back in the tube, the bow already unstrung and pulled out in the trunk of your car, to already think about the next one?

In another part of the country? Since I discovered archery and more particularly competitions, this happens to me every time. So, imagine when, in last January, I saw, on a very well-known social network, an announcement for an IFAA competition, over 4 days, with a different one every day: Field, Hunter, Standard 3D and UAR, and moreover in a country of my native language, I didn't hesitate even if

I've never shot the first two! So here I go for Savoie, in Challes-les-eaux for my first Field, first Hunter and especially first competition in France! Four days in a row, right in the middle of May, will you tell me? Yes, because in France (and in other European countries) Ascension Thursday is a public holiday and some people take advantage of it by taking the Friday off and have a long 4-days weekend.

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The arrival at the Archers de la Roche archery club is not for the faint-hearted! Indeed, after leaving your car in the village, you have to climb up for 10 minutes on foot, up until the registration desk to retrieve your scorecard, then and go to the bar where Stéphanie, Clara and

Marie-Hélène greet you with the greatest of smiles by handing you a very hot coffee. With advanced registration in place, once we arrive we already know not only the people with whom we will shoot during the day but also the target number on which we start. Very practical indeed! During the registration, we had the choice between shooting the 28 targets non-stop or having lunch after 14; I chose the second option.

Some people preferred the first one because during international competitions we shoot the 28 targets in a row, so it makes a kind of training, one month away from the EBHC. The courses layout are very technical, many targets do not have a backstop which means that if we miss, there is a good chance that your arrow will break. And another thing that is rarely seen in Ireland: given the number of archers on the course

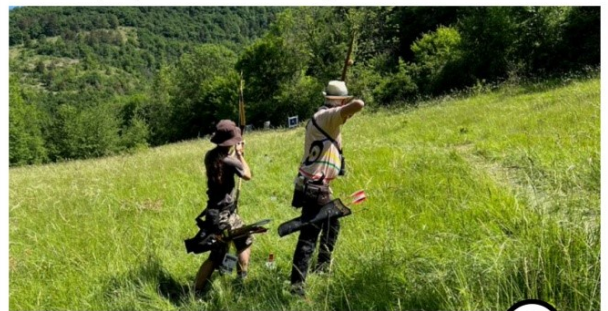
(nearly a hundred), two people shoot at the same time, side by side (or back to back with left-handed and right-handed).

Day 2: Hunter Round aka black targets with a white dot in the center; very practical when the target is in the shade! Basically, we're on the same lines as the day



On the first day of competition we start with a Field Round, face targets with black circles on white backgrounds. The competition promises to be tough and the weather is already summery in this region of the world: 25° C forecasts during the day! As we are in France, following a long tradition of archery: on the first peg, before firing his/her first arrow, the archer announces: "Archers, je vous salue !" (Archers, I salute you!) And the rest of the team replies "Salut à toi !" (Salute to you!). The first fourteen targets are in the shade, in the woods. A good part of the other fourteen they are in a field, in full sun; and the slope of the terrain does not help much more: in fact when you shoot across a slope, you have to "compensate" the shot upstream otherwise the arrow is not in the axis; this is very obvious on long distances like the 80 yd shoot. A Field Round is 28 targets with 4 arrows per target, so I kid you not by saying that you are tired at the end of the day. Once the last targets are fired, the gear is back in the bag, a very cold beer is required! Then shower. Then a good meal. And a good night's sleep because we'll do it again the next day!

before except the faces and the shooting pegs have changed. The distances are also a little more reasonable: min. 11 yd, max. 70 yd. In Hunter Round, there is what in the jargon we call box of points: we shoot 35 cm target faces at a distance between 14 and 20 yd, and there are three like that on a course of 14 targets (therefore six for 28 targets), this is where we can make the score go up even by pulling LB or HB. There is also a fan shot: the four archers are lined up in front of a target. Once the first arrows are fired, we all shift one peg to the right, until we all fired our four arrows. As with the Field Round, four arrows are fired per target, making it two days in a row when 112 arrow! Same as the day before: dinner, shower, sleep and beer (maybe not in that order).



3rd day: Back to the World of 3D targets! And this time it is a Standard 3D, with the same difficulties on the ground as the previous two days. Another point of the IFAA Book of rules I did not know: in 3D Standard, we have maximum distances for the four target groups, but there is no minimum distances. So shooting a group 1 located at 30 yards but with an elevation of 10 m (30 ft) is not so easy; just like a group 4 located at 3 m in front of ye! But it takes more for me to fall into the trap! Today, I beat my own score! And with shooting only two arrows instead of four, we finish the competition a little less late, which is not bad, so we can enjoy the drink longer (and the beer in particular!). Another beautiful day is coming to an end and the weather will still be nice for the last day of the competition (and yes, already!).

4th and last day: We are in known territory: Animal Round, Unmarked distances. And this time my three companions of the day all come from Switzerland! The course, with already three competitions in the legs, we begin to know it: its difficulties, its traps: the old ones that we know about and the new ones that we try at all costs not to fall in but we put too much effort to avoid them we fall in anyway! As the competition ends early enough, it allows us to enjoy the award ceremony. I take the opportunity, after finishing my beer of course, to ask a few questions to the "Conductor" of these four days of IFAA competitions, I name: Sylvain



TIFAM: *Can you introduce yourself?*

Sylvain Renard: *My name is Sylvain Renard. Self-entrepreneur at Savoie Archerie Services. I offer seminars, archery courses to train for one day, a weekend or a week. I have a Certificate of Sports Educator, I am a Referee-Umpire in FFTA/WA, Equipment and bow Inspector in FFTL/IFAA. Archery is my passion, it's my life: I live for archery! I'm lucky enough to live from it. I promote archery every day. In my head it's archery all the time. When the contest is over, I'm already projected on the next one.*

TIFAM: *We notice a good number of people who made the trip. How many archers in total?*

SR: *We had a total of 278 archers over the four days with a record of 97 participants on Saturday for the 3D Standard and 92 for the UAR. So more people for the 3D than Field and Hunter which are longer and more complicated disciplines to set up.*



TIFAM: *Can you explain a bit more, please?*

SR: *In Field and Hunter we have no choice in terms of distances. If it's 71 yards, it's not 70 or 72. If there is a bramble, it must be "blown up", if there is a rock it must be removed; with 3D we have more freedom. And when I see a FU missing his first arrow, I tell myself that the trap worked; a trap in which an LB would probably not fall.*

TIFAM: *We feel that it takes a hell of an organisation to offer four official IFAA competitions over four days in a row?*

SR: *Yes, it takes a good organisation but above all a good team for the re-pegging in the evening, the change of shooting bosses for certain targets, change of shooting axes for the 3D. I thank the people of the club who make the course three times: once in the early morning, before the arrival of the archers, to set up the targets; a second time as competitors; and a third time in the evening to remove all the equipment!*

TIFAM: *Tell us a little about the club now!*

SR: *The club was founded in 2016. The leaders, coaches and archers were all in other clubs (FFTA)* and decided to regroup and found the Archers de la Roche club under the banner of FFTL/IFAA. There are very few IFAA clubs in the region. In addition, we are lucky to be next to Chambéry, which is a large agglomeration, on private land. Hence our great friendships with the farmers who make their fields available and who allow us to go with the jeep on certain targets. A big thank you to them too!*

**(FFTA: Fédération Française de Tir à l'Arc affiliated to World Archery; FFTL: Fédération Française de Tir Libre affiliated to IFAA)*

TIFAM: *Coming from FFTA/WA, what made the club choose to turn to FFTL/IFAA?*

SR: *Friendliness, which we no longer have in WA. An example: everyone stay for the results, except of course those who live very far away, the help between the archers, the smile of the people, criticism but in a positive way. In WA people are grumpy because they have fired badly, or they will complain because there is a branch or*



a twig across the line. In IFAA we don't have that Sword of Damocles where we absolutely have to score. We must participate with the Score and Classification Card but we have no minimum points to achieve prior to participate in EBHC, WBHC, etc. This allows us to have more technical, more fun courses. Besides, everyone shoots from the same peg, whether you're Longbow, Barebow or Compound. In WA, if the archers do not realise their minimum points, they complain, they are not happy. IFAA also does a lot to encourage children to shoot archery. The cubs, from the black peg, they manage to hit the target and they are happy. Indoors, they shoot at 10 yards, they touch the target and they're happy. In WA, they have to shoot from 18 m (20 yd) on a 40 cm face, not everyone can touch it and those who can't are frustrated. Outdoors it's even worse: they shoot from 20, 30 or even 35 m! It's impossible for a child. In IFAA, it's more family friendly.

FFTL archery in France meets three criteria: honour, courtesy and friendship. There is no conflict between Compounders and Tradies, we squabble, yes, but there is no conflict.

TIFAM: Will there be another competition next year?

SR: In March 2023, the club will organise the French Indoor Championship, then at the end of August, the Parcours France at the Kerellis ski resort with 4 courses of 14 targets: Field, Hunter, 3D Standard and UAR. So will we have a contest again in May? You should see, but when you see people happy, it certainly motivates volunteers!

And that concludes my interview with Sylvain. It also concludes fantastic four-days of competition. And once again under a summer sun (more than 25°C today!).

Review after these four days of competition:

- Lost Arrows: 2
- Broken Arrows: 4
- Reunion with friends after more than 2 years of Covid
- New friends
- The head full of souvenirs

Archers, I salute you!




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