

To tune or not to tune – that is the question... OR, rather... :

**“To tune the body first or tune the bow? THAT is the question”** with apologies to William Shakespeare.

What I will be dealing with in this missive, are the following 3 coaching options:

- ❖ Quick Fix,
- ❖ Intermittent Coaching with Goal Setting & Linked Sessions,
- ❖ Personal Performance Coaching Programming including the BioPsychoSocial Model, Performance Profiling & Periodisation with Goal Setting for long-term sustainability.

and the rationale that goes with each, whether shooting with a Recurve or Compound bow.

As a coach the choice is yours: *“Do I check the archer’s equipment first or do I look at their shooting ability; do I offer them a ‘quick fix’ or a sustainable coaching intervention?”* However, ideally you want archers to stick with you, so empathy, understanding and conscientious personal care is what I (and all the top coaches) advocate, whether it be in a paid or amateur capacity, in your own club, or as a visiting coach, does not matter as long as you realise it is **all client-led & client-compatible**.

In my experience of over 50 years in coaching (40 of which as a Senior Coach), the answer often depends on either the level of coach or the confidence & experience of the coach being asked.

When requested to coach someone for personal coaching, the coach’s first priority should be to establish whether it is for **(a)** long-term performance coaching, **(b)** intermittent linked session coaching or reluctantly, **(c)** just for a “quick fix”; such as being often asked:

*“Can you just have a quick look at me and see if I can do anything to improve?”*

The latter **(c)** is usually a case of relatively little commitment on the part of both the archer and coach that more often than not, will necessitate just a basic equipment check and tune-up (see list below) that will gain immediate results plus perhaps, suggesting a slight adjustment to technique, knowing full-well that as soon as something goes wrong the archer will revert back to what they know and have always done, or ask another archer in their club, blame the coach and accept the outcomes without any further effort to put things right. Sounds cavalier but 90% of the time this happens and eventually the sport, unfortunately, loses another archer and frustrates the coach.

HOWEVER, the previous two options; (a) and (b), are more satisfying for a coach and way more beneficial for the archer but (a) in particular, shows real commitment by both the archer & coach, especially if they are prepared to sign up for several sessions over many months (or years) and want to discuss real progression procedures. In these circumstances, equipment is definitely **not** the first priority other than standard basic safety tuning checks, such as:

- **Recurve Bow:**
  - Bracing height,
  - Tiller,
  - Condition of string, all servings and nocking point - including type/position,
  - Limb/riser condition, straightness and long rod alignment,
  - Centre-shot, arrow rest condition/type, button tension/position,
  - Tri-axial bow-sight checks,
  - Wrist/finger sling - tension & position.

### ➤ Compound Bow

- Check axels & 'C' clips, limb condition, limb-tip forks, straightness, limb bolts,
- Check / adjust / replace: servings, string, D-loop, cables & cable guard position,
- Check peep position & tri-axial checking of extended scope sight and bubble level,
- Check Draw Weight , Draw Length & tillering,
- Check / adjust / replace launcher,
- Stabiliser set-up & balance.

***NB This is all assuming the bow in question is safe to use, i.e. in good condition & fit for purpose.***

### ➤ Arrows for ALL shooting styles:

- Type, suitability & spine matching,
- Condition – shaft & ALL other parts, including fletch size, nocks & pile type/weight,
- Length & resultant clicker position if Recurve.

If all these items are checked, any coach who then decides to effect premature dynamic bow-tuning must remember, the tuning is only as good as the archer's capabilities, so I would recommend **not** to consider any dynamic bow-tuning until the body & mind have been 'tuned' and the archer is shooting consistently, before attempting to perfect dynamic bow-tuning. Done the other way round is liable to cause extra workload, which might be fine if you are charging for your time (!) but in a conscientious paid/non-paid scenario, time is of the essence & mind/body-tuning is paramount.

Following basic equipment set-up checks, necessary adjustments for non-dynamic tuning, start observing the client archer from various viewpoints, keeping notes or using various analytical charts/diagrams, or using camera, stop-frame video and possibly strategically placed mirrors whilst they are shooting at a bare boss at short distance. Several downloadable, free or relatively cheap, sports video analysis software programmes for both Android and iOS platforms, offer various user-friendly analytical features such as MotionView™, the Coach's Eye Sports Video Analysis App, Kinovea (for Windows), Spiideo, CMV Pro (iOS only) and more, are available on-line.

## RECURVE BOW

Prioritise:

- Preparation of the shot; mental & physical
- Inner calm and shot set-up
- Posture & alignment during the shot routine:
- The phases of the shot:
  - Loading, fix bow-hand ('Y' Position) and string fingers placement (Hook)
  - Set Position (Preparation) to the Set-Up (Pre-Draw) position
  - Shoulders & arm positions during Set & Set-Up: chest down/rotate tail forward
  - Back usage and both elbow positions during Transition stage to Full Draw
  - Draw hand location and Draw Force Line (DFL) (from both 3 & 6 o'clock)
  - Aiming and...
  - Expansion (chest, front shoulder joint, anterior serratus & traps) to loose and...
  - Follow-Through + after-shot Hold
  - Shot review & Recovery ready for next shot

This process is generally applied to the Recurve Freestyle shooting procedure although some apply to Unlimited Compounds. However, Compound bows require slight procedural changes due to their inherent mechanical advantages & their basic design concept for Compound Unlimited shooting, as follows:

### COMPOUND BOW

Prioritise:

- Preparation of the shot; mental & physical
- Inner calm and shot set-up
- Posture & alignment during the draw-up & shot routine:
- The phases of the shot:
  - from loading, setting bow-hand, ensuring arrow nock placement aligns the peep, until achieving full draw...
  - in that the pull through the peak weight, dependant on cam design and let-off, effects changes in the draw-up process namely:
    - no prep-line, set and set-up to pre-draw and moreover, the draw hand placement, which is dependent on release aid design and releasing mechanism, will all be different to recurve.
  - Aiming centred through the peep sight and scope plus checking if the bubble is level at full-draw, which may delay the loosing process.
  - During the transition phase, back muscles & anterior serratus usage is still required plus **gentle** squeezing the trigger to activate the release (incorrectly labelled as “back tension”!) and ...
  - the DFL, are both similarly important, albeit usually a flatter line due to the facial/cheek anchor, all producing a more dynamic and sometimes explosive follow-through.

However, a sustainably successful Coach/Coachee relationship can only succeed if the two become known to each other empathetically, which builds in an empowering feeling of archer **Autonomy, Belonging and Competence** – known as the “**ABC of EMPOWERING**”. Empowering is what makes people want to take part, i.e. Motivation. This means that you should both sit down and discuss each other’s needs and decide how best their journey should develop in order to succeed and maintain the success. We are advised as coaches, it is **HOW** we can create an environment that empowers the individual as it is “**Task Focussed**” as opposed to “Superiority Focussed” where the coach is “in charge”, which all creates a less threatening and more enjoyable experience for the archer.

### Successful Relationships

In order to build a successful relationship a coach has to understand the whole person in front of them, which entails knowing the archer’s psychological and sociological background. According to Richard Cheetham MBE, Senior Fellow in Sports Coaching at University of Winchester (2019)(2020):

***“The more you take time to understand and connect with your participant, the more you will help them flourish”***<sup>1&2</sup> i.e. Time to Understand (1) & Connect (2) = Flourish (3)

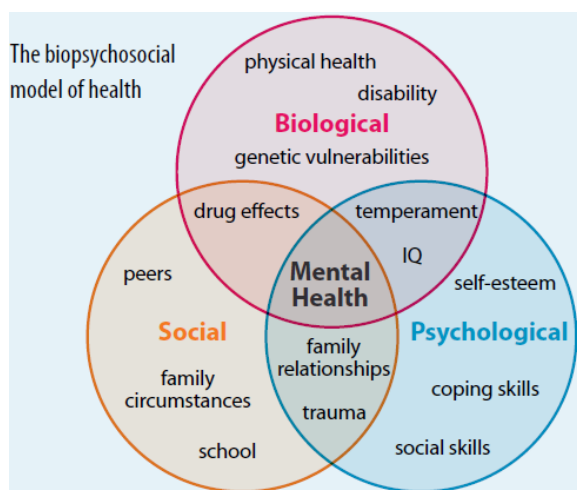
In both health and sporting environments it is accepted that great coaching will encourage more people to be active more often. It is generally known there are wider benefits involved, including physical and mental wellbeing, as well as individual, economic and social development. By providing specialised support and guidance that is aligned to an archer's individual needs and aspirations, you will improve their experience of our sport and physical activity in general.

However, I have modified Cheetham's 3-step paradigm as I think there are **four** key ways to improve the archer's experience, which produces this 5-step **person-centred equation of empathy**:

**Understanding + Connecting & Building + Supporting = Thrive**, i.e.

1. **Understanding** them as an individual +
2. **Connecting** with them and....
3. **Building** a positive relationship +
4. **Supporting** them, allows them to....
5. **THRIVE (Flourish)**

This person-centred equation is very much allied to the **BioPsychoSocial Model**, first advocated in 1977 by George L. Engel<sup>4</sup> that has since become the alternative to the Biomedical dominance of many health care systems, where the interaction of a person's Biological, Social and Psychological perspectives effects that person's health.



Engel's 1977 BioPsychoSocial Model

In a sporting context the diagram below is more succinct and has been further developed by Russell J.J. Martindale in his **Talent Development Model** for sport that highlights **4** key principles:<sup>6</sup>

1. **Technical**
2. **Psychological**
3. **Physical**
4. **Sociological**

My interactive interpretation of his Biopsychosocial Model is shown diagrammatically below as:<sup>6</sup>



.....and is known as **The Multifaceted Nature of Development Approach**. Basically, it illustrates the link between all the situations that impact on a sports person and as such must be taken into consideration before attempting to correct, improve or even succeed with your archer.<sup>3</sup>

Quoting a short UK Coaching article from, April 2019, entitled:

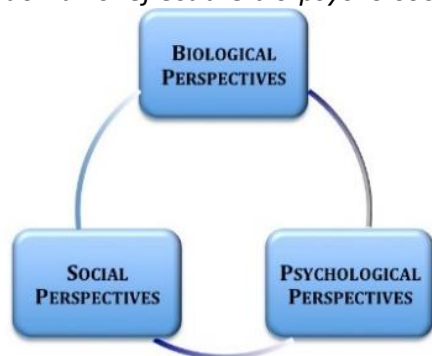
*“Understanding the BioPsychoSocial Model”* that states as follows:<sup>9</sup>

*“Throughout the ‘pathway to excellence’ every participant will experience peaks and troughs in their progress and this model has become a popular way of characterising human development Participant development in sport and physical activity is dynamic and non-linear and there are multiple pathways that individuals may take as they progress in their activity.*

*This nonlinearity, coupled with the importance of ‘key events and transitions’ in the developmental pathway, makes it essential that support systems offer flexibility, individual optimisation and ‘return routes’ as features of any formal ‘pathway to excellence’.*

*Sports participation, like any other aspect of human development, is influenced by a host of integrating factors. The selection and classification of these factors is inherently a matter of judgement, combined with the need to balance inclusivity with parsimony.*

*There are three domains that seem to represent the core subject knowledge that underpins participant development in sport: physical, individual and social domains. Taken together, these domains reflect the bio-psycho-social nature of development.*



*The biopsychosocial [BPS] model (see diagram left) has become an increasingly popular way of characterising human development (Kiesler, 1999).<sup>5</sup>*

*It posits a dynamic interaction between biological, psychological and social factors, all of which play a significant role in human functioning.*

*Approaches that fail to acknowledge the multifaceted nature of development, perhaps by focusing too narrowly on physiological or psychological processes, are in danger of missing the complex, dynamic and non-linear nature of development, and are therefore inherently inadequate.*

*In some ways, this approach can be understood as an attempt to extend the biopsychosocial form of analysis within the context of sport. Coaches and coach educators should ‘unpick’ the central elements of development – biological, psychological and social – and use these domains as focal points when developing planning and approaches to person-centred coaching.”<sup>4</sup>*

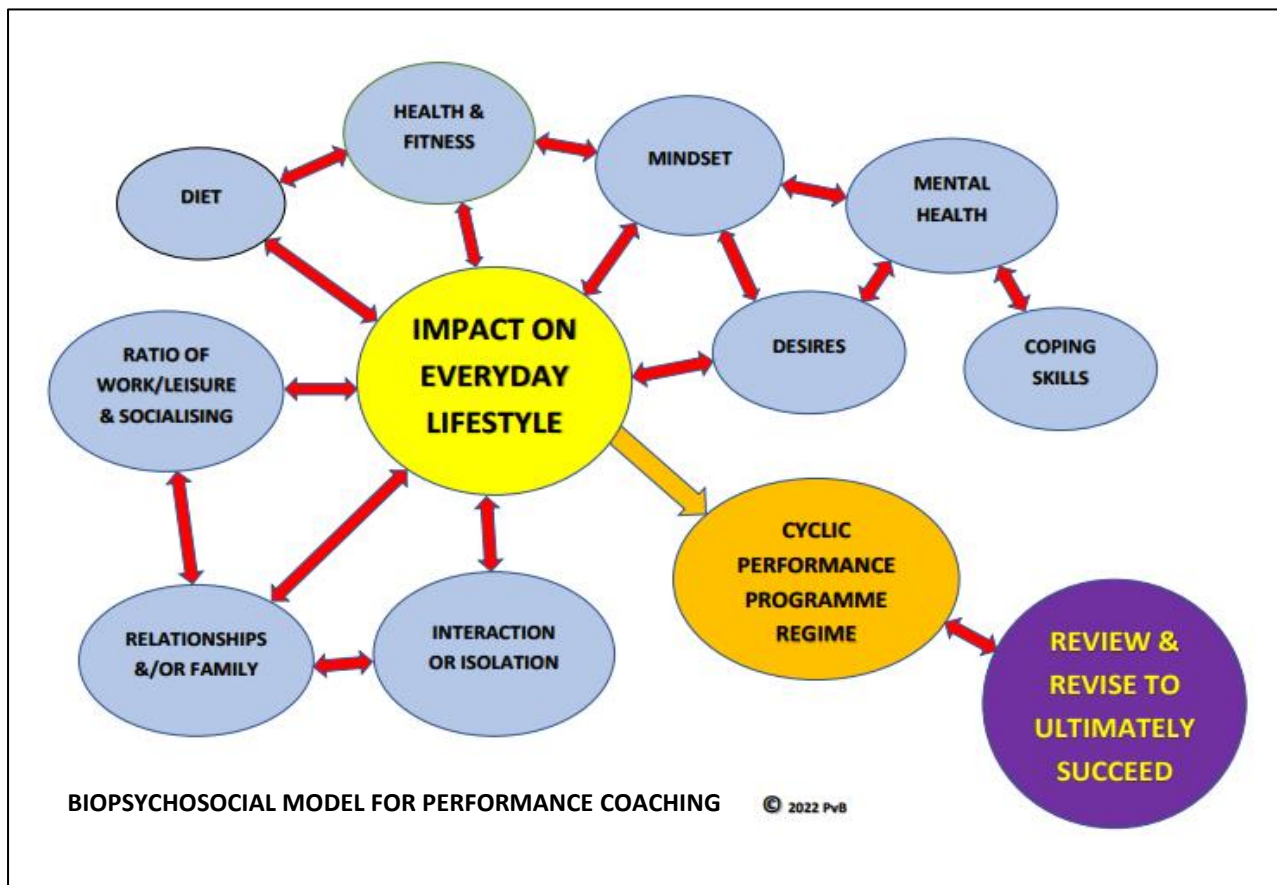
In my layman’s terms, I conclude the following:

### Coaching Interventions:

Before any physical coaching commences, the archer and coach should discuss their objectives and reasons for coaching as well as the possible longevity of the process. There are **NO** quick fixes that will continue to work, especially in stressful situations, so all interventions once agreed, have to



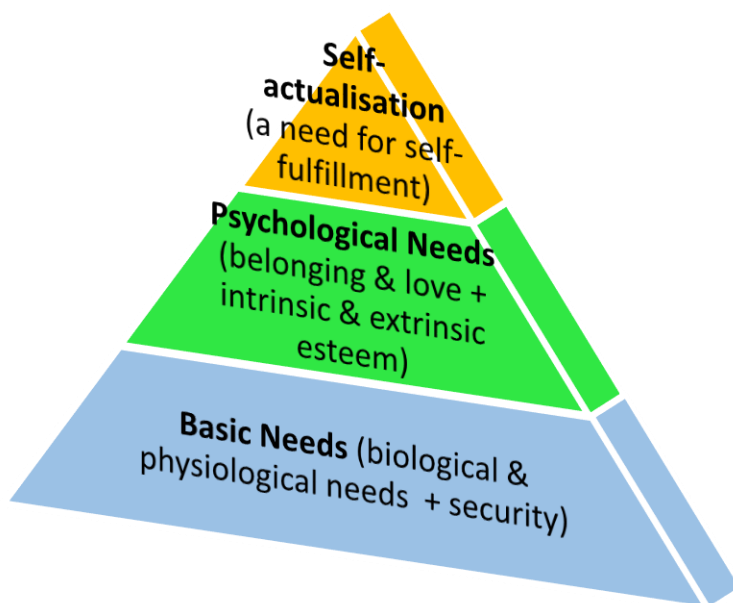
have ownership and that is formed from a synergy of thoughts by both the coach & archer. I have further considered the biopsychosocial model and adapted it to graphically illustrate the issues that impact onto everyday lifestyle and could influence the construction of any cyclic performance programme when initially profiling for it, which ultimately impacts of the success or otherwise of the programme, possibly necessitating review and revision of said programme in order to reach the ultimate actualisation. See my BPS model diagram below:



Ultimately, the coach empowers the archer to take ownership (autonomy) in order to believe in what they are doing. Once they have discussed and agreed the various needs of BOTH parties, a signed agreement should be created which binds the two parties together, viz. a Contract of Commitment, to be ethically honoured by both parties. However, the coach should also be aware that social influences of family responsibilities, work-life to leisure ratio, health issues and any other external factors, will impinge on the coach/coachee relationship.

Therefore, they should establish a workable cyclic periodic time-frame, agree a **Plan > Do > Review** format for **Goal Setting** and start planning with such tools as **Performance Profiling** & a detailed **Periodisation Programme** using various visual planning models such as spiderweb or radar graphs, bar-charts, wheel charts or any other devices illustrating the current situation as well as transient & future achievable goals. The Plan > Do > Review model initialises a process of execution that can be reviewed at every coaching stage, from planning through to self-actualisation, including achieving agreed Process and Outcome goals.

Based on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943)(1954)<sup>7 & 8</sup>- see my diagram left – one can experience



how **Self-actualisation** (a need for Self-fulfilment) follows on from **Psychological Needs** (belonging & love plus internal & external esteem) that similarly follows on from **Basic Needs** (biological/physiological needs plus security).

Goal setting is paramount and integral in a long term programme that illustrates short, medium and long term goals but most importantly all must have achievable **Process Goals** that will lead towards and achieve the stated **Outcome Goals**. Outcome goals will hopefully lead to the **Dream Goal**, which could be an Olympic Medal, be a

National Champion, or even County Champion but remember, Dream goals don't just happen; they are **made** by long hours of planning, hard work & dedicated application with guidance from an empathetic experienced coach.

When goal setting we aim to use **SMARTER** Goals, which is an acronym, as follows:

### **SMARTER GOALS**

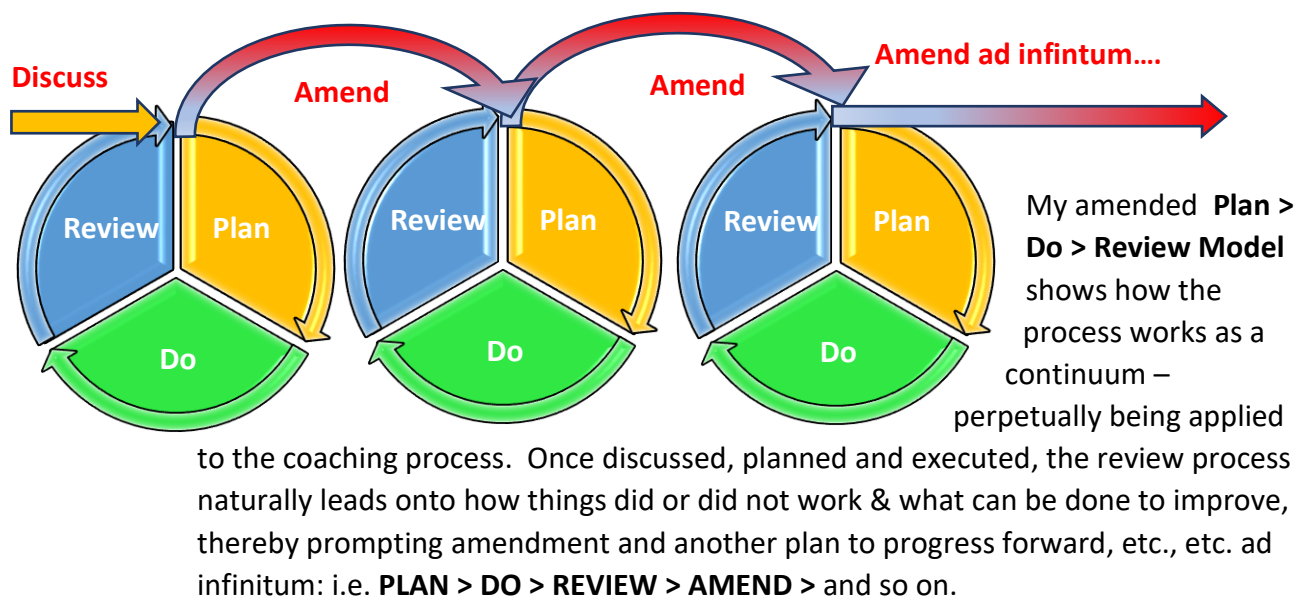
- **S**pecific;
- **M**easurable;
- **A**ceptable;
- **R**ealistic;
- **T**imed;
- **E**xciting;
- **R**ecorded.

Goals must be decided and owned by the archer and jointly agreed with the coach as being **achievable** within the agreed time-frame and fits both their relevant lifestyles. The **Process** Goals, if achieved will lead onto the **Outcome** Goal that both set. If they are not achievable they need to be reviewed and reassessed using the Plan>Do>Review (PDR) model and set at a level that extends the archer but will also be achievable. Contrary to this, if too easily achieved, then the setting was under-valued and needed to be made more realistically difficult. Goal setting should not be easy but definitely attainable and inspirational. In line with the above, I have modified the PDR model used by UK Sport and redefined it as PDRA: Plan>Do>Review>Amend as I find reviewing suggests just a discussive process but by adding "Amend" it implies change, as without "Change" nothing will progress and stagnation sets in – unless of course the coachee has succeeded in attaining the set goals and self-actualisation has materialised. In this case the process begins again with new goals being set at an advanced level.

Here we have the standard, and often quoted by UK Sport, et al; the **Plan> Do>Review** (PDR) model, originated for both SEN teaching and business quality control by various authors from Demming, Shewhart, Kolb, Dewey, to even more recent educational & manufacturing theorists including Japanese car manufacturers for increased productivity.



The following diagram illustrates my continuum model for my **Plan>do>Review>Amend** process based on the above PDR model:



In order to facilitate this model to an advance level, we need to utilise the Performance Pathway cyclic system using a Profiling and Periodisation process. There are many ways to deal with this and a plethora of information is available on line to assist coaches who want to go to the next level of coaching to enable their archer's success.

However, following is a brief explanatory overview of the PPP & P system:

### Performance Pathways, Profiling & Periodisation.



## Performance Pathways, Profiling & Periodisation

Cyclic Performance Pathways use Performance Profiling and Periodisation as a methodology to both assess what is needed for your athlete and the process to achieve these goals that are jointly agreed with your archer. It requires input from the archer plus guidance from the coach and is used in the review process. The various charts stated previously visualise the whole development process, whilst goal setting helps to achieve the coaching pathway, allowing for review and planning adjustment for continued development.

**Periodisation** helps plan **Macrocycle**, **Mesocycle** and **Microcycle** time-management with rest, coaching and competition schedules incorporated.

**Performance Profiling Process (PPP)** has **3** major purposes & comprises **4** steps:

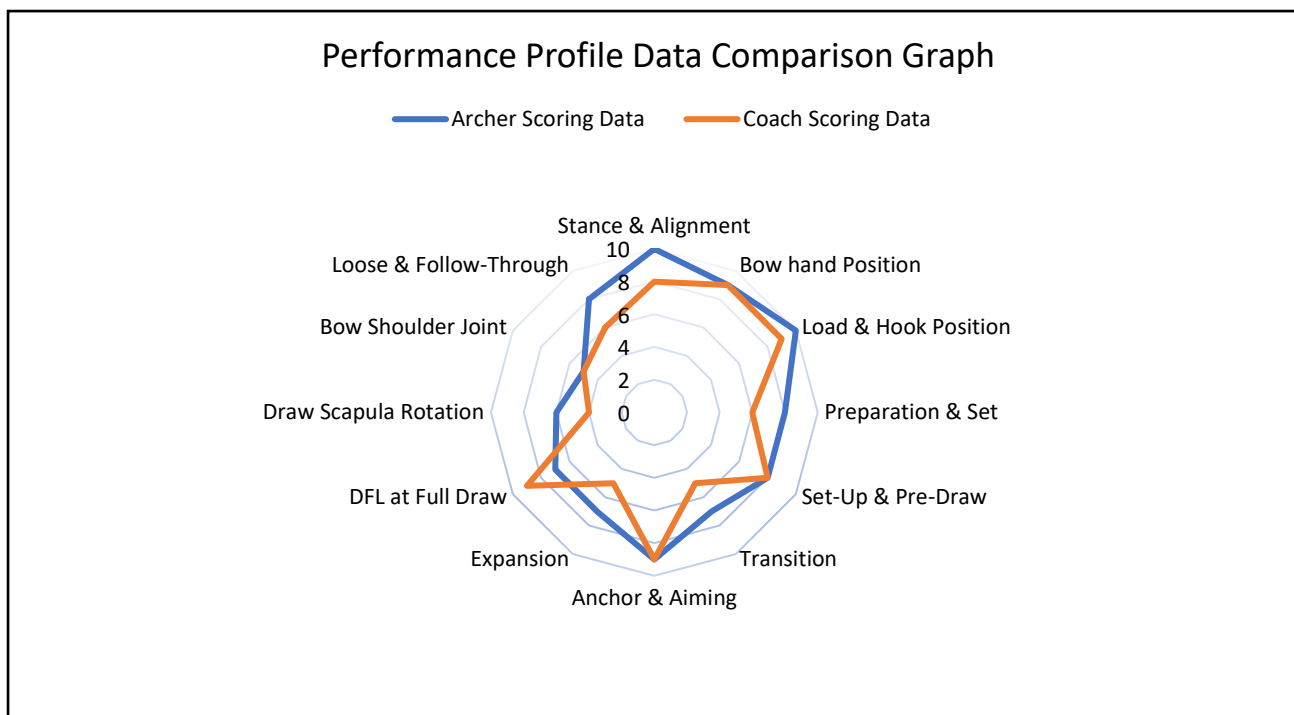
- **1.** To aid in identifying an appropriate intervention
- **2.** To maximise the archer's motivation and adherence to the programme
- **3.** To monitor any changes over time.
  - **Step 1.** Coach outlines the PP process and its purpose.
  - **Step 2.** Archer identifies the characteristics of an elite archer.
  - **Step 3.** Archer rates each characteristic in terms of level of importance & self-assessment at their own standard.
  - **Step 4.** Archer & coach analyse results & agree the way forward.

**Alternatively, after the coach explains the PPP regime (the 3 major purposes):**

- **Step 1.** Archer determines own priorities for analysis.
- **Step 2.** Archer determines own performance levels and enters values on, say a radar or spider-web graph (see below).
- **Step 3.** Coach also enters their evaluation on archer's performance for comparison.
- **Step 4.** The discrepancy on the spider-web/radar graph gives the scope of development required that aids the required coaching programme.

*See the following diagrammatic illustration of this process:*

Where there is a large gulf between the comparisons of the two perceptions, the discrepancy will illustrate areas for improvement as the extrinsic view by the coach will likely be more objective. However, optimistically the gap between the two perceptions should be minimal (although the ideal would be the same), providing the archer is being realistic with their intrinsic "gut feeling" and not wishfully thinking. The graph values could be for abstract items such as concentration, confidence, determination, shot quality, or physical items such as DFL, body alignment, transition, aiming, ease of clicker activation, etc, etc. Values would normally be rated as 0 = low and 10 would be maximum.



In this illustrated example of a spider-web /radar graph, the value rating range is 0-10 and there are 12 items listed concerning the shooting process. Remembering the area between the two data perceptions is the amount of work required; in this instance, either the archer has an inflated opinion of their own abilities compared to the coach's eyes or has quite some work to do to achieve their opinion and will obviously lead to a discussion of the two perceptions and the way forward.

Archer's Name:	Archer Scoring Data	Coach Scoring Data
Stance & Alignment	10	8
Bow hand Position	9	9
Load & Hook Position	10	9
Preparation & Set	7	6
Set-Up & Pre-Draw	8	5
Transition	7	5
Anchor & Aiming	9	9
Expansion	7	5
DFL at Full Draw	10	6
Draw Scapula Rotation	6	4
Bow Shoulder Joint	5	3
Loose & Follow-Through	8	6

*Note:* The data is collected in the table (see left) first and is transferred using an Excel spreadsheet automatically.

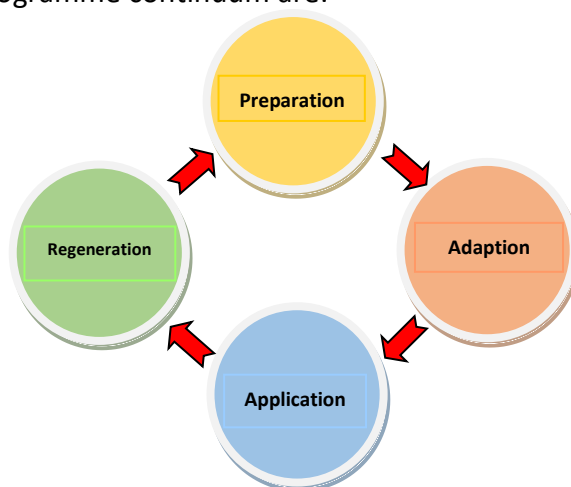
The aim of **Periodisation of Training** is to improve performance. The process of breaking down and monitoring the training programme into manageable units, each with its own goal, is known as Periodisation.

It uses a workable time-scale incorporating all the relevant training data and events in the social, coaching and competitive calendars, linked to the goal-setting targets. Annual timelines are divided into Macrocycles, Mesocycles & Microcycles within the preparation, competitive and transition phases. It should be continually reviewed, realistic and amended if and when necessary but must always be archer-led and coach-monitored i.e., the archer has autonomy.

The 4 corner-stones of any training programme continuum are:

1. Preparation
2. Adaption
3. Application
4. Regeneration

This is a continuing process that is always active & ensures training is reviewed, updated and relevant for progress.



However, paraphrasing Frank Dick OBE (*British Athletics Federation Director of Coaching during the 1980's responsible for many Gold Medallist Olympians*) in his July 2021 article for UK Coaching: **"How Olympic Gold Medals are Made"** (2021)<sup>3</sup>: like great athletic coaches, we should **not** be planning **forwards** but planning **backwards**. In other words, start with the major competition your archer wants to win and plan backwards from that event to now and decide on the plan that maps the best route to success. Therefore, my illustration starts with the **Macrocycle** (1 or 4 years ahead) planning.

The usual period of a **Macrocycle** is one year but for elite recurve archers it will be an Olympic Cycle of 4 years and is made up with various **Mesocycles**. Typically, the Mesocycle is 2-6 weeks, which is made up with various **Microcycles** and the Microcycle is 2-7 days long with a number of training sessions for full-time archers, so this would need tailoring for an amateur club/county archer.

Training phases would be split into 3 sections: Preparation, Competition & Transition phases with each phase having 2 sub-phases:

1. **Preparation Phase** with
  - a) General Preparation and
  - b) Specific Preparation (67-75% of macrocycle).
2. **Competition Phase** with
  - a) Pre-Competition and
  - b) Competition (including minor competitions, tapering to the main competition).
3. **Transition Phase** with
  - a) Psychological and
  - b) Physiological Rest periods.

The 2 **Mesocycle** training phases consist of sequences of 2-6 week-long **Microcycles**, grouped under 2 headings:

1. **Preparation Phase** consisting of 4-6 Microcycles and
2. **Competition Phase** consisting of 2-4 Microcycles.

All **Microcycle Phases** consist of workouts required for adaptive success before changing variables for continued progression. Or, put another way:

**Continued progression is achieved by changing variables for adaptive success using workouts.**

Returning to basic coaching procedure, during the microcycle phase we have a process to work to:

**Physical preparation:** warm-up / stretch bands / aerobic exercises.

**Mental preparation:** shot routine-mental rehearsal / familiarity / environment / calm breathing & coping strategies for the unexpected.

**Coach Observation:** posture / alignment / preparation to set-up / clicker control & shot execution to follow-thro' - all viewed from 3, 5, 6, 7 & 9 o'clock to witness positioning and muscular-skeletal usage (or not).

**Coach Intervention:** based on what is seen; to be consolidated / improved / corrected / tried.  
Then...

**Review + Action Plan:** jointly discussed & way forward agreed with archer.

Prior to this, early microcycle training should include:

- Empathising with & empowering the archer through biopsychosocial discussions,
- psychological and mental training to include preparation and coping strategies,
- bio-mechanical training, including weight training to target specific muscular groups from head to feet including rest and recuperation periods to aid muscle mend & growth,
- and diverse activities to prevent staleness like swimming, dancing, athletics, viz. aerobic wet & dry sports, etc.,
- besides archery technique training.

### Synopsis

If you have made it this far, you will see that good quality coaching is very labour-intensive, often time-consuming but immensely rewarding for both the archer and the coach. For the past 50+ years I have dedicated my life to archery & archery coaching both as an amateur and for the past 25 years earning my living as a professional coach and coach educator at all levels from club to International for AGB and FITA/World Archery. Whether it is in Pakistan, Korea, USA, throughout Europe & the Mediterranean countries or around the UK, it appears obvious to say everyone who pulls a bow and lets fly an arrow, gets a massive 'buzz' hitting the target for the very first time. So, harnessing that euphoria and channelling it into a lust for continuing to hit the gold is the Holy Grail and when it happens for you, it gives you as much enjoyment as it does for the archer.

Repeating the feat with other archers is the real challenge and the more you achieve it, the more powerful the “drug” of success gets a grips of you, especially when your archer medals at a major competition, be it in the UK or an international event or even a World & European championships. It’s nearly as good as doing it yourself but remember, we are always expendable so enjoy it whilst you can. I have had the pleasure of both as archer and coach, and still want to achieve at all coaching levels. Even though I don’t compete anymore – cut me and I bleed green!!

Frank Dick has also stated a formula for gaining success with his competitors, whatever their sport, in his previously mentioned article for UK Coaching: *“How Olympic Gold Medals are Made”* (2021)<sup>3</sup> and that is this following 4 point process:

1. **Planning** (*“great coaches don’t plan forwards, they plan backwards”*)
2. **Preparation** (*“coaches who fail to prepare really are preparing to fail”*)
3. **Knowing Your People** (*“the importance of connection, understanding emotions, identifying stress signatures; creating consenting journeys”*)
4. **Gaining a Psychological Edge** (*giving your [archers] “a mental edge, including unleashing the power of storytelling and use of analogy, simile and metaphor”*)

This is very similar to the Biopsychosocial Model I referred to in earlier paragraphs on **Coaching Intervention** and how we plan in order to work with a person that we have previously empathised with and understood their social influences, hang-ups and worries/concerns that could affect performance and effect negativity. How we deal with it will impinge on their ultimate success or indeed failure (see points 2 & 3 above).

However, success is very fickle and can be short-lived so be prepared for negative times and have contingency plans. Winning is great but consistency and recovery can be better, so remember the Plan>Do>Review paradigm because you must realise, there are other coaches out there who are working just the same way and their archer may be better on the day due to a small detail, or just plain luck that their shot was made at the right moment and hit the 10 as opposed to your archer scoring 9. Good skill always needs a piece of luck no matter what others say, and we are not machines. Despite all the preparation, it is how they cope and bounce back that matters, and that is your job as the coach, to instil that into your archers.

So...Enjoy – it is all worth it in the end.

**See next page for list of References**



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## Footnote:

I am indebted to the above referenced sources for inspiration and help in writing this article, but the majority of my knowledge comes from being both a successful archer and coach, besides studying a plethora of coaching theory, systems and techniques. My coaching experience - and that road has been long - has at times been challenging, but immensely enjoyable and fulfilling, so if I can enthuse, encourage and guide other coaches to achieving fulfilment besides helping archers also to achieve those heights, then that is a bonus and what all Coach Developers should be aiming for.

I have always been approachable and will continue to be, offering advice, tuition, mentoring and to continue coaching for excellence, whether it is for winning a medal at a World Championships / Olympics or getting into the County Team and shooting a personal best at a County Champs.

Happy coaching and enjoy your archery too.

Philip.

February 2022.