

# Why Shooting Glasses?

**Editor's Note** *So, there I was sitting in an informal seminar at the Stanislawski Open on the topic of vision correction for archers. I have been trying (unsuccessfully) for quite a few years to find somebody to write about the topic and I am thinking maybe the presenter, Chuck Cooley of Feather Visions, is the guy. After just a few minutes of introductory material, Chuck says, "Steve, can I borrow your glasses?" I hand them over and with just a few looks through the lenses he mutters, "Okay, this is the worst case scenario for an archer—astigmatism (pretty strong), off-axis." He went on to detail why my vision was more than problematic for archery. The rest of the seminar went by rapidly as questions were fired from left and right, all handled admirably. So, after only a small amount of arm twisting, Chuck agreed to write a series of articles for you of which this is the first. Enjoy!*

One of the most common questions I have to answer is: "Why shooting glasses?" Often it's from archers at an event who are holding a \$900 bow, \$300 arrows, a \$175 release, a \$150 scope, a \$250 sight, and then spent \$200 for string and cables, maybe some lessons and as much as \$1000 for the trip travel and entry fee to shoot the event. So there they are with a rig that nears \$2000 plus a \$1000 weekend and they are going to look at the target with a set of glasses from the "mart" or the "mall," then wonder why they can't see well. I don't get angry but I can't help thinking it's kind of like heading to the Olympics with a bow kit from 4-H.

*My first rule of sport is—if it takes special equipment, and you're committed to it, and you want to do better . . . get it. It's not summer camp anymore. Would you play football with dress glasses? How about diving with your readers . . . or trying 4-wheeling with your regular all season radials? No? Then why compete with office or regular duty glasses? Competitive archery takes specialized equipment and your glasses should fall into that category.*

The attitudes of most archers when it comes to their glasses is difficult to understand. Often they believe that if their glasses work great for 40-50 hrs a week in the office and driving and life in general, why wouldn't they work in the field? If you compare a decision regarding archery equipment, say getting different arrows for field or 3-D shooting or getting different bows for tournaments and hunting, those decisions are easy to understand or justify. A need for special glasses for shooting is not so easy to understand. It's more or less determined by your commitment level to the sport, if you are a committed tournament archer, it should be considered. If you are just a weekend or every now and again archer, I might say, "Skip it for now."

The justification is this: just as special equipment for your bow or your sport helps you be more successful, so will shooting glasses. If you see better, you will shoot better. This translates into better hunting, better tournament scores, better league nights, and an across-the-board

better experience when you shoot your bow.

Now that you are ready to have a better time, let's look at the rationale for your decision.

**Fit** First of all, is fit—the frames of shooting glasses are designed and built with a single purpose in mind: to allow shooters to see better. Fit is critical. The goal is to have lenses that come virtually in contact with your nose and are at least as wide as your orbital cavity (eye socket). That means that they cover your field of vision from edge to edge. This allows for complete unobstructed vision especially while your head is turned to the shooting position. In stronger corrections there might be peripheral blur, but in shooting glasses it is minimized. These oversized lenses also help to eliminate stray light or light leakage (from around the lenses); this prevents confusion in the visual pathway. Compare these with ordinary glasses. If you have ever been confronted with looking directly into the frames of your glasses at full draw, you know what I mean. Ordinary glasses don't fit closely enough to your nose. Ordinary glasses aren't designed to function as well off of the center of the lenses. Fit is even more important for recurve archers who have a greater head turn at full draw.

**More Lens Options** Most shooter's glasses frames offer you interchangeable lens configurations to suit different targets or different lighting conditions. This means you can tailor your glasses to optimum conditions. If it is a bright sunny day you can use a darker lens, indoors you can use a clear lens, and if you also shoot trap or sporting clays, there are colored lenses to help you pick up moving and or colored targets. All of these lenses snap in and out of the same frames.

**Adaptable Corrections** With shooting glasses you generally don't want a "progressive" or "no line" style lens. If you want a bifocal lens, it's placed low and away from the eye so it tends not to interfere with shooting but is available to keep score or make adjustments as needed to your equipment. Additionally when you have prescription changes it's a simple solution to just order the new set of lenses and install them yourself. They come from the shop ready to go.

All in all when deciding to take the next step in purchasing equipment for your "game," give some consideration to your eyes. They are the single most important tool in your bag. The adage says it all, "You can't hit what you don't see."



*Shooting glasses (left) compared to prescription sunglasses (right) have larger lenses, have no frames on the bottom (that obscure vision), fit more snugly around the nose (especially important for recurve archers), have flexible and comfortable ear pieces which keep them in place on your face, and come in a wide range of colors.*

*In coming articles I plan to cover: what to look for in an eye exam, what to look for in lens design, bifocals (or not?), lens colors, what does my prescription mean, shooting in sunglasses, and more!*



**Chuck Cooley** is a NYS Licensed Optician with almost 20 years in the industry. He is also a Fellow Member of the OAA and NAO. He holds National Certification in Opticianry from the ABO. In archery he is the Vice-president and co-Founder of Feather Visions. He has ten years of competitive archery to his background as is now a NFAA Touring Pro sponsored by Bowtech, Carbon Express, Spot Hogg, CR Scopes, Copper John, Stanislawski, Nealy's, BCY Fibers, Lancaster Archery Supply, Archers' Advantage, and Oakley. He is coached by Gary Neal.