

■ BY ROY GRIMES

National Archery in the Schools Program Celebrates 6th Anniversary

THE NASP HAS GROWN BEYOND EXPECTATIONS, AND THE RESULTS SPEAK FOR THEMSELVES.

God answers prayers, kids love archery, teachers care about students, and conservation professionals recognize the power of the National Archery in the Schools Program to grow the shooting sports. An awful lot is right with the world!

Let me share some results and milestones of the NASP, thanks to thousands of supporters worldwide.

NASP is Maturing

The NASP quietly celebrated its “iron” (a.k.a. 6th) anniversary on March 3, 2008. Currently the number of schools that have adopted the NASP is 3,900 percent greater than the original objective – 4,700 vs. 120 schools.

There are 84 percent more states in the program, eight months sooner than planned — 46 vs. 25 — and four more countries have adopted NASP than anticipated — Australia, Canada, South Africa and New Zealand.

According to NASP coordinators, 3.2 million students



have taken NASP lessons. Since its inception 15,000 teachers have been certified as Basic Archery Instructors to present NASP lessons by an army of 1,000 Basic Archery Instructor Trainers.

NASP Events

We are pleased that half the NASP states have established a culminating event, or as known in the archery world, a state NASP tournament. Counting region, state and national competitions, more than 25,000 NASP students sent more than 1,000,000 arrows 10 and 15 meters to the 80-centimeter FITA target in 2008. Laid end to end these Easton Genesis arrows would extend 473 miles — from Louisville, Kentucky to Madison, Wisconsin!





Mathews president Matt McPherson, left, and NASP co-founder and national director Roy Grimes, right, join Ben Blevins and Courtney Campbell, winners of the 2007 NASP Nationals. Blevins, from Pulaski County High School in Kentucky, won 1st place overall with a score of 297 out of 300. Campbell, from Mead County High School in Kentucky, set a new female record with a score of 296.

On May 10, 2008, at the national tournament, Kentucky's Courtney Campbell posted a new female world record with a score of 296 out of 300. Campbell used the basic physical education archery equipment: a Genesis bow without sights, releases, or stabilizers. She was shooting full-length Genesis 1820 arrows. She drilled 26 bull's-eyes and four 9s on the way to her achievement. I've witnessed a few adults shoot the NASP format with this equipment and none have shot higher than a 292!

In the male class, Ben Blevins, also of Kentucky, posted a score of 297, just one point shy of Graham Cofield's world record.

In the middle school division, two 7th graders, Meaghann Dunn and Taylor Cundiff, beat everyone, including the 8th graders, with scores of 290 and 289, respectively.

As you can tell from just these few results, gender isn't much of an issue in NASP. In fact, 39 percent of the participants in the NASP Nationals this year were female student archers. Kentucky, the birthplace of NASP, is also getting more company on the awards podium as individuals and teams from New Jersey, Illinois, Ohio and Alabama all placed very high in the standings this year.

Getting Everyone Involved

To compete, a NASP team must contain 16 to 24 students in their respective division: Elementary, Middle or High School. It is common for a middle school student to shoot up on the high school team and have elementary students on middle school teams. We require that every NASP team have at least five

archers of each gender on their team.

At the conclusion of the tournament, the top 12 scores from the team, including at least four of the opposite gender, are summed to establish team rankings. Ties among individuals and teams are first broken by comparing the number of 10s (bull's-eyes). If the tie persists, an exciting shoot-off in front of thousands of spectators is conducted.

By the way, all team members are also shooting for individual ranking as they compete together.

Some folks wonder why a NASP archery team contains so many members and why every member's score is not counted in the team total. One of NASP's founding principles is that many students should participate. By accepting teams of 16 to 24 members rather than only five or 10, more kids are energized to stay in archery to be on the team. By requiring more members than are counted in the team score, some students who might need the team very badly but not be the best archers, are provided an opportunity to participate.

For instance, a blind child might not be able to shoot all bull's-eyes, but that student might very well be the inspiration for other team members to do their very best — on the range and in the classroom.

Every NASP competitor must attend a school that offers NASP lessons as part of the in-school curriculum. We've received a couple of complaints about this policy. A few folks think we should allow other teams to compete in NASP tournaments. There are some great 4-H archers, Scout archers and surely some

wonderful archery club kids. All these young archers are equally important and we hope they can someday compete in NASP tournaments. However, if we allow non-NASP-school archers to join the tournament, the incentive for some schools to join the program will be weakened.

Some individuals would be satisfied to have only an after-school archery team of eight to 10 kids, especially if they could compete at our very high-profile NASP State or National tournaments. By insisting the school adopt the program for all its students in order to field a NASP team, many schools have joined the program.

In these cases, students who had no idea they had an interest and aptitude for archery discovered this great discipline. We are especially excited about these "discoveries" because they might never have experienced success in school had we not been true to our principles.

NASP Continues to Expand

In 2008, New York, Connecticut and New Mexico joined NASP. This past May, two fellows from South Africa, Nic and Wilhelm, journeyed to Illinois to be trained at a workshop hosted by Dave Cassens, the Illinois NASP coordinator. Nic and Wilhelm intend to launch the South African NASP pilot in 21 schools in Pretoria, South Africa. Isn't it ironic that archery will be used to improve the lives of young people in a place where the bow and arrow has such a long history?

Four states still haven't initiated NASP, and we continue to hope Delaware, Massachusetts, Vermont and Rhode Island will join soon. We are holding workshop dates in February, March and April of 2009 for these states.

Many more kids deserve the chance to participate in NASP. Schools of every kind, including public, private, parochial, Christian, alternative, disciplinary, schools for the blind and deaf, and home schools all participate. There are more than 109,000 public schools in the United



States. Obviously, with just under 5,000 schools in the program to date, we have a long way to go.

At our current rate of four NASP schools being added daily, it will take another 71 years just to reach all the U.S. public schools. Obviously, we are not content with our current pace. When NASP advocates contemplate a graduating class from a non-NASP school, we wonder how many students didn't graduate who might have, if NASP had been available to engage them. How many graduates are uninspired as the move forward in life? How many don't have a third focus, after God and family, as the most important thing in their lives? Surely some don't have anything healthy, they are passionate about.

Sustaining NASP

While the most exciting occurrence in NASP is the addition of new schools and their students, we



continue to also work on making NASP a more sustainable organization. One of the greatest challenges educators face at "wanna-be" NASP schools is funding for NASP archery equipment. Administrators are eager to implement the program after hearing how safe it is and how students respond so positively. Teachers are excited to go through NASP training to become better archers and instructors. Thanks to the generosity of NASP equipment providers, most of the equipment is available to schools at wholesale prices, without even excise or sales taxes.

However, for some of these fired up folks, finding support in their cash-strapped budgets is tough. Some schools easily find the money in their education or sports' budgets. Many receive donations from archery clubs, conservation groups like the National Wild Turkey Federation, and local businesses to supplement school budgets. But an unfortunate few (hundreds of schools actually) in every state make the decision to join the program, get one or more teachers trained but struggle to acquire the equipment. It is these folks we have in mind as we improve our growing and staying power over the next few years.

Leading this charge to find more equipment money for NASP schools is our Government & Business Development Director,

Tom Bennett. Bennett, who co-founded NASP when he was commissioner of the Kentucky Department of Fish & Wildlife Resources, has countless contacts with great interest in the success of the NASP students. Just this year his efforts have attracted the attention of Bass Pro Shops, Cabela's, Weatherby Foundation, Dick's Sporting Goods, Sportsman's Warehouse and Academy Sports.

In most cases, we are asking these kinds of donors to set up carefully coordinated (with state and national offices) matching equipment grant programs for new schools. A future model could be that new school prospects, within certain distances of major retail sports stores, may be offered grant monies if they agree to implement NASP as part of the in-school curriculum, get their teacher(s) trained, and participate in some type of "store-sponsored" after-school archery endeavor. We are excited about the prospects of these types of partnerships accelerating NASP's growth in new schools.

Finally, toward the end of 2008 we are hoping to have the results from our most ambitious evaluation of NASP to date. Principals, teachers, parents and students claim that NASP so engages the student that grades, attendance and behavior are improved among NASP kids. Nine NASP states, the NWTF and the National Shooting Sports Foundation have pitched in to pay an outside firm to see if the anecdotal results being shared by educators can be quantified.

The firm, Responsive Management, of Virginia, is working in these states to compare grades, attendance and behavior records (office referrals) of students participating in NASP against those who aren't. If these anecdotes can be confirmed by actual student records, we will have our most powerful tool to date to convince schools everywhere that NASP is more an education program than an archery program.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Roy Grimes is the co-founder and national director of the National Archery in the Schools Program. To learn more about NASP or to contribute to the organization's 501c(3) non-profit Educational Foundation, visit www.archeryintheschools.org.

Strong Support for NASP's Scholarship Shoot-Off

The Scholarship Shoot-Off has become one of the most anticipated activities at the NASP Nationals. Again this year the top four boys and top four girls were called out in front of thousands of people to shoot for \$14,000 in college scholarships. We are grateful to the following contributors to the 2008 NASP Scholarship Shoot-Off:

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