

Novelty Shoot – Archer Duels

Ragar Ravens Friend created this fast paced, audience pleasing shoot. It is fantastic fun at demos, and has often been done at Mermaids. His original inspiration was a paper target available in modern archery/hunting stores – a paper cutout of a Canadian Mounty. There are opportunities for variation in both targets and the manner of running the shoot, and there are probably many different versions out there.

Targets are easy to make, and can be as simple or elaborate as you and your artistic ability desire. You need a sturdy type of paper or posterboard/foamboard – it seems like 1/8 – 1/4” thick foam board works best. Draw and cut out the following body parts: one head, one torso, two upper arms, two forearms, two hands, two upper legs, two lower legs, two feet. These work just fine as simple, “rough shape” targets, though if you want to draw/paint garb, faces, etc. it can add to the atmosphere. Simple, unpainted white shapes do make it easier to see where arrows land though.

Attach the body parts to each other by punching small holes through the foamboard, and tying with thin leather cords, strings, etc. Try to avoid metal (staples, pins, etc.) to save on damage to the arrows. Depending on how tightly/loosely you tie the pieces together, there should be some amount of movement, so the silhouettes can be bent into different shapes (surrendering with hands-up, dancing, running, etc.) As far as a backstop is concerned, a wall of haybales tends to work well. The targets can often be slid under the ropes binding the hay together, and target pins can be entirely avoided.

The number of archers shooting should match the number of targets up. Each archer is represented by the target directly in front of them. The object is to shoot all the other archers in fatal locations, before they shoot you. Spectators and marshals can call out who is dead, maimed, etc., and an archer who is declared dead (or injured in a way that makes them unable to shoot) must stop shooting. The winner is the last lord or lady standing, though double kills are common. For the purposes of an archer, we have declared an arm wound to be non-fatal (but you do have to stop shooting.) If the archers run out of arrows, you can either call it a draw (and declare all survivors to have won) or retrieve and continue on. If an archer mistakenly shoots the target representing them, yes, they have just killed or damaged themselves. It is a lot of fun to see all the newer archers gang up on the veteran, or to see dear friends get very serious about killing each other (all in good fun, of course.)



Ragar and his son.



The dueling targets Manigarm the Scythian made at Mermaids 2009.