

How to determine your archery bow class in an NFAA Tournament

by Mike Brown

The Oregon Bow Hunter's conduct three state championship tournaments each year. There are no qualifying rounds for the tournaments. First time tournament shooters are welcome and encouraged to attend and participate. In order to participate, a shooter must determine which shooting style he or she wants to shoot. It is not just the first time shooter that gets confused in what bow class they should register. Here is a guide to register for the appropriate shooting Division and bow Style. There is a chart at the end to help you determine your bow class.

(Note: some of the Divisions and Styles may be different than what you have seen in the past. Earlier this year NFAA voted to add some Divisions and expand some of the Styles to the different Age Divisions. This change actually begins on June 1st but we need to display these changes because the State Field is after June 1st. Also you should read how these changes affect the State Triple Crown if you plan to participate in this contest.)

There are three major factors in determining your bow class:

1. Gender
2. Your Age
3. Your shooting style

1. Gender is an easy and obvious choice, male or female? The code for this is M or F.

2. Next is to select the age bracket you will compete against:

- ✓ C = Cub (Age up to 11 years old)
- ✓ Y = Youth (Ages 12 through 14)
- ✓ Y/A = Young Adult (Ages 15 through 17)
- ✓ A = Adult (Ages 18 and older)
- ✓ S = Senior (Ages 50 and older)
- ✓ S/S = Silver Senior (60 and older)
- ✓ M/S = Master Senior (70 and older)

Cub through Young Adult can compete in a higher division. Adults are considered to be in the highest age division. Examples are; a Cub, Youth, and Young Adult could compete in the Adult division, but not Senior, Silver Senior or Master Senior divisions. Seniors are allowed to compete in the Adult division, Silver Senior are allowed to compete in the Senior or Silver Senior and finally, Master Seniors are allowed to compete in Seniors, Silver Seniors or Adults Division. The reason for this is simple. There may not be enough or any competitors in your age division or the tournament might not host a particular class. Therefore, you can compete against the next higher division. Would you rather shoot against competition or shoot in a division by yourself?

3. Last, you need to determine your shooting style. Here is where it gets a little tricky.

There are ten bow styles.

1. FS
2. FSL
3. FSLR
4. BB
5. BH
6. BHFS
7. BHFSL
8. TRAD
9. LB
10. CB

Each bow style has two parts. Part one is bow components restriction and part two is the how the bow must be used restriction. Examples are; Competitive Bow hunter can only have a 12" or less stabilizer length. A Competitive Bowhunter must keep their finger against the arrow for all shots.

At this point it would take too much to explain every detail for each class. For more detailed information you can go to the following link at the NFAA website.

Here is a summary list of the equipment restrictions for each style:

- ✓ **Freestyle** (coded **FS**) is virtually an unlimited class. You can shoot any bow with a movable sight, any length stabilizer, and use a release aid. The sight can have certain magnifications.
- ✓ **Freestyle Limited** (coded **FSL**) is basically the same as FS with the exception that you cannot use a release aid. "Limited" means you shoot without a release aid.
- ✓ **Freestyle Limited Recurve** (coded **FSLR**) are standard Olympic bows. You are allowed to use a recurve with sights, stabilizers, and clickers.
- ✓ **Barebow** (coded **BB**) can use any bow including a compound. In addition you can use any length stabilizer, any rest, a level and you can "walk the string." ("Walking the string" means your fingers can change position on the bow string during the tournament.) You cannot use a sight.
- ✓ **Competitive Bowhunter** also called **Bowhunter** (coded **BH**) can use any bow including a compound. Your string finger must stay against the arrow nock and it must stay in one position below or above the arrow nock. You may not use a sight, clicker or level. You may use a stabilizer up to 12" in length.
- ✓ **Bowhunter Freestyle** (coded **BHFS**) bows can have up to 5 fixed sight pins (you cannot adjust your sight after you start shooting an official round), a stabilizer up to 12" in length, and you can use a release aid. These are usually compound bows.
- ✓ **Bowhunter Freestyle Limited** (coded **BHFSL**) is basically the same as BHFS with the exception that you cannot use a release aid. "Limited" means you shoot without a release aid.
- ✓ **Traditional** (coded **TRAD**) bows are all bows without wheels or pulleys (no compounds). All longbows and recurve fit into this division until the longbow class was formed. Your string finger must stay against the arrow nock and it must stay in one position below or above the arrow nock. You may not use a sight or level on your bow. You can use a rest, front stabilizer up to 12 inches and a button. All of the arrows must be the same.
- ✓ **Longbows** (coded **LB**) is determined by string not touching the bow limb. A recurve bow string lays on the limb in a limb groove. Not all longbows meet NFAA rules. Modern longbows that have a reflex are considered traditional bows not a longbow. In addition you must use wooden arrows that are all the same.
- ✓ **Crossbow** (coded **CB**) is just that, a crossbow. Crossbows are a new class for NFAA and at present is only shot at indoor tournaments capable of handling the additional needs of such equipment. Ranges need fortified bales and may not be able to handle crossbows. Consult the web site for restrictions.

Like in the age divisions, you may always move up and shoot a bow in the next higher style class. For example; you can shoot a BHFS in FS, allowing you to move your sight pins. In some case you may forced to shoot in the next higher bow style. Not every bow class is available in every age division. For example; there is not a Traditional or Longbow class for Cub, Youth, or Young Adult. Therefore these archers would most likely sign up for the Barebow division. Below is an age division chart with available shooting styles.

Pro or Pro Senior

FS
FSL
FSLR

Adult, Senior, Silver Senior or Master Senior

Can shoot any of the ten classes listed above

Young Adult, Youth or Cub

FS
FSL
BHFS
FSLR
BB

This is not a complete listing of the rules, just a summary to get you headed in the right bow class. There are many restrictions such as arrow sizes. For example, many classes require all of the arrows to be identical including fletching color. See page 28 and 44 of the NFAA rule book for complete details.

Below are a few examples to help you select your division and bow class:

Age 59, Male, shooting a compound with a long stabilizer, no sight.

Age code = S

Gender code = M

Bow Style code = BB

Final Code would look like this: S-M-BB

Age 14, Female, shooting a recurve

Age code = Y

Gender code = F

Bow Style code = BB

Final Code would look like this: Y-F-BB

Age 17, Male, shooting a compound with pins and release aid

AGE code = Y/A

Gender code = M

Bow Style code = BHFS

Final Code would look like this: Y/A-M-BHFS

Remember, it is your responsibility to know your division and in particular your shooting style and the rules applicable to your shooting style. This is in addition to the tournament rules and the rules pertaining to the type of tournament you are shooting, such as Indoor, Field Shoot or a 3-D. If you are not sure.... ASK!