

ARCHERY SLANG: SPEAK THE LANGUAGE

By: P.J. Reilly

Sports and slang go together “like peas and carrots,” as Forrest Gump would say.

There isn’t a game out there that doesn’t have its own unique phrases and words – and you’re not likely to find the sports meanings in any standard dictionary.

When I played Little League baseball, my neighbor’s father hollered, “Can of corn!” every time someone hit a pop fly. In football, when the punting team wants to limit the other team’s return, the kicker is likely to punt the ball short and low, so it bounces around on the ground. That’s a “pooch” kick.

Well, archery is no different than any other sport when it comes to slang. And to understand what’s going on, you need to speak the language.

Here at Lancaster Archery Supply, we surveyed the company and came up with a list of slang terms and phrases we regularly use on the target range and in the woods.

(This is a family operation, mind you, so we’re only including G-rated slang here.)



Pin wheel – When your arrow hits dead center in a scoring ring.

Spider – When there's an X in the center of the bull's-eye, and your arrow hits the center of the X.

Chunk – A bad shot. “Man, I chunked that one.”

T-Rex arms – This is when the archer doesn't extend his or her arms all the way out while shooting.

Jar-licker – A shot where the arrow just barely touches the line for a higher scoring ring.

Tweener – An arrow that's between two scoring rings; also, a shot on a 3-D course that's at a distance that doesn't end in “o.”

Grip it and rip it – Just pull back the bowstring and shoot. Don't think about the shot.

Kiss out – When an arrow is deflected into a lower scoring ring by another arrow already in the target.

English – Pushing or pulling your bow arm at the shot to account for some defect in your form, in an attempt to “steer” the arrow into the center. “I had to give that arrow a little English to get it in the 10-ring.”

Tae Kwon Bow; Bow-Jitsu – Exaggerating your body movements at the shot to account for the aiming device sliding off the center of the target just as the arrow is released.

Lincoln logs; Poles; Line cutters – All of these are terms applied to large diameter arrows used in target archery to maximize the chances of hitting higher scoring rings.

Kentucky windage – Aiming off the center of the target, or leaning the bow right or left so the bubble in the level is not in the center, to account for windy conditions.

Too much pinky – When your back tension release goes off faster than normal.

Sandbagger – An archer who intentionally shoots lower scores in order to compete in a division that's below their true shooting skills.

Training wheels – The cams/wheels of a compound bow. (This is usually a term of derision aimed at compound bows by recurve and longbow archers.)

Gunch – When your mind thinks you shot the arrow, but your body didn't let it go, and you flinch.

Slammer; Hog; Toad – A trophy-sized animal.

Slick head – A doe.

Stewie – A mature doe.

Snot – Arrow lube.

Sticks – Arrows.

Sled; Ax; Rig – An individual archer's bow setup.

Robin Hood – When an arrow hits another that's already in the target and ends up perfectly inside the shaft.

Body stabilizer – The front-weighted midriff of usually older, male compound archers.

Drive-by – Releasing an arrow as the aiming device moves across the center of the target.

Punch – Slapping a trigger or thumb-button release instead of squeezing through the shot.

Bucket hatter – A recurve archer.

Trad – Shortened name for traditional archery.

Inside-out – An arrow that is fully inside the scoring ring. It's not even touching a line.

Struggle stick – A recurve bow. The term originates from the image of a recurve archer shaking while trying to pull the arrow through a clicker.

Molly-whopped – A perfect shot on a deer, as in, "I Molly-whopped that buck at 20 yards."

Burn a hole in the yellow – Keep your aiming device locked on the 10-ring until you release the arrow.

Mash the gas – Pushing with your bow arm and pulling with your release hand with equal pressure through the shot.