

Shooting Categories from: Eric Bennett Archery

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The next topic I get asked about on a regular basis concerns the different divisions and equipment types for archery in the [Paralympic Games](#). I will do my best to answer with the disclaimer that the information is an overview and not meant to be official.

There are currently 3 different divisions in Para Archery. Unlike many Para sports, our divisions are based largely on equipment choice rather than disability. While we have a division for the more severely disabled athletes the other 2 divisions are based on which style of archery we shoot. In order to compete, all archers must be “classified” to determine that they meet the minimum criteria for diminished ability.

There are rules in place to determine if you are eligible to compete as a Para archer. These rules can be a touchy subject for some and I will not be discussing that here.

First up, Open Recurve! Why? Because that’s what I shoot!

Archers that are “classified” and meet the disability criteria can choose to shoot in the Open Recurve division. Recurve archery is the traditional style archery that uses a bow with no mechanical pulleys. Recurve bows are currently the only bows you see in the Olympics. Because this is an “open” division, there are athletes with a vast array of different disabilities including wheelchair users and amputees. Recurve archers shoot at a distance of 70 meters. I shot a recurve in the London Games and will be shooting my recurve in Rio 2016. (Eric shot with a shoulder harness and mechanical release in 2012 and with a mouth tab in 2016 - RS)

Second, Open Compound

Compound bows are the more modern style bow you see that has mechanical pulleys on each end. The pulleys allow an archer to pull with a greater force for a shorter period of time. Once the bow is pulled back it “lets off” so that the archer is holding with less force. Compounds can often (but not always) be more accurate because of this. Again, archers that meet the criteria for disability can choose to shoot a compound instead of a recurve. In some cases, an athlete’s disability may make it easier to shoot a compound instead of a recurve or vice versa. Compound archers shoot at a much smaller target but at a closer distance of 50 meters. Compound shooters can use mechanical releases, levels, and sights with magnification. I shot a compound in the Beijing Games.

Last, but definitely not least, W1 Compound

This is not an open division. In order to compete in this division athletes must meet stricter disability criteria. These archers are those athletes that are quadriplegic and have disabilities both above and below the waist. The majority of the athletes have spinal injuries that limit the use of their arms and legs due to paralysis. There are also a

number of W1 archers who are multiple amputees with loss of function below and above the waist. These athletes have a very unique set of equipment rules that combine rules from the recurve and compound divisions. W1 archers shoot at the same target and distance as Open Compound.

Each of the 3 divisions above are also divided by gender. For the Rio Games there will be Men and Women competing in all 3 divisions for the first time which is really cool.

On an important side note, there is one division that is not currently in the Games but hopefully will be someday and that is Visually Impaired archery. I'm serious, blind archery! It is one of the coolest things you'll ever witness. I am proud to be friends and teammates with two of the best blind archers in the world.