

BowBusiness

BY PATRICK MEITIN

Winn Archery Equipment Company

Anyone who has spent much time reading the pages of this magazine no doubt understands that I'm a staunch finger shooter. This comes from an early start in archery and deep traditional roots. Bowhunting is basically the only reason I shoot a bow. Any form of target shooting is simply a means to increase my skills as a hunter. I feel release aids are for target shooting, and you'll have a difficult time convincing me otherwise. I use a release to conduct occasional bow tests, especially with those fashionably short numbers. I often employ releases while fighting bouts of target panic. I bowhunt with fingers.

That said, I understand there'll likely come a time when I'll be forced to use a release, considering the abuse I've inflicted on my joints over time. I'm stubborn, but if it means adopting a release or not shooting a bow altogether, I'll use a release. That release will likely be one of Winn Archery's Free Flight designs. Contemplating my latest African rig, a 90-pound beast assembled with Cape buffalo in mind, I think maybe I would be wise to start looking in this direction sooner rather than later. There are obvious features that coax me to admit this.



Winn Archery's Free Flight release design is now nearly 23 years old, but its design was well enough ahead of its time when conceived that it is still copied by competitors today. The glove design allows complete control and does not add to your draw length.



Winn Archery has been making quality releases from its South Haven, Michigan, facility for going on 22 years. The company now keeps 11 employees busy, its releases gaining new popularity every year.

Winn Archery's Free Flight release aids make the transition from fingers to release an easy one. First of all, they don't add to your draw length, allowing you to use a familiar anchor. The release mechanism is held tightly and shot-ready for unexpected opportunities and the complete control that finger shooters are accustomed to. The Free Flight glove design makes heavier weights, like my African rig or a bow used in cold weather, easier to pull, distributing the weight over the entire hand and grip—not just the wrist. According to Winn, this design reduces felt draw weight by 20 percent. This glove design is available in x-small through x-large hand sizes. Eight-ounce leather is covered with reinforced Cordura, to ensure that the glove never stretches, with a comfortable 1.5-inch-wide nylon securing strap and a mechanism machined of solid, hardened steel. All of these features make it an obvious choice should the time come when I must use a release. The Free Flight design is also a release shooter's release, endorsed by the likes of well-known bowhunter Ray Howell, guest host of the "American Archer" television show.

I only relate such information because, like me, Winn Archery owner and president, Geary Garvison, was also once a staunch finger shooter. Garvison has been bowhunting whitetail deer in his

home state of Michigan since age 12—about 38 years—and he also has deep traditional roots. Twenty-three years ago, Garvison was having trouble pulling and holding the draw weight that he wanted with his fingers, so he began looking for a solution. "My fingers just weren't strong enough," he admits.

He did not want to lose the anchor point he was used to, the control that he insisted on. He began working on his glove design to carry his new release concept, slowly refining it and finally beginning to make them for others.

By the next season, Garvison was in the release aid business and chose Winn Archery as the name for his new company because he knew he had a winner. Twenty-two years later, that basic Free Flight design is still the mainstay of his business. It is interesting to note that 22 years ago all the release manufacturers combined could have easily been counted on your fingers. Most of those early release designs are now history, but the original Free Flight has survived the test of time, often copied by others in the industry even today.

Today Winn employs 11 workers, all aspects of manufacturing is conducted in the U.S., and it has introduced three new release models since that beginning model. The second release model to

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come from Winn Archery was the Relaxed Trigger release, now more than 16 years old, which was another design well ahead of its time. This model, the C-12, allows the archer to engage the mechanism on the serving, pull the trigger and draw the bow, then simply relax the trigger to release the arrow. This

tages of it, we would sell even more of them. They make for a very natural, smooth release even if you have shot fingers your entire life. The design can make any shooter, even a longtime release shooter, a better shot."

The original Model C-10 is a standard index-trigger model; for all practical



Ray Howell, well-respected bowhunter and guest host of the "American Archer" television show, adamantly endorses Winn Archery's Free Flight release, the only release he has used for years. Here he poses with an African impala taken using the release.

makes the transition from fingers even more natural. It can also help cure trigger-punching problems for those who have used a release aid extensively or when fighting target panic brought on by a conventional release.

"These releases are decent sellers," says Garvison, "but I think if dealers would take more time to demonstrate how this release works and the advan-

purposes, it is the same as the very first one offered 22 years ago. Five years ago, Winn introduced the SS Caliper, a more modern solid-stainless-steel model with larger, easier-to-load jaws. It has no springs to wear out, an adjustable trigger and buffed and polished jaws to be easy on the serving. The trigger is fast and smooth, assuring an accurate shot.

Going with the latest trend, Winn Archery's brand-new Loop Hook Mechanism is made just for release string loops, offering quick loading without increasing accustomed draw length. A simple hooked spur slips easily onto any of the standard string loops so popular today, without the poking and prodding to get online often necessary with some caliper release designs. Its crisp mechanism assures the archer a perfect release every time.

Winn Archery's glove design has remained unchanged since the beginning, and Garvison has no plans to make changes now. He says some dealers have asked for a softer glove, but that would mean sacrificing ruggedness and quality, which he refuses to give up. This is also the reason his releases are only machined from solid steel. "There is nothing wrong with aluminum," says Garvison, "but my steel mechanisms never wear out. In fact, they are guaranteed for life. You can wear out our gloves, given time (replacements are readily available), but you will never wear out the mechanism."

Garvison is quick to point out that his design has been copied by many, but this does not worry him as he insists his built-to-last quality keeps him ahead of the copycats. "Within the year we will be coming out with several new ideas. These are new designs like nothing currently made, believe it or not. I can't discuss details, but these ideas will help make for more comfortable, accurate shooting."

Look for these new designs soon as well as Winn Archery's latest release models and time-proven models, by contacting Winn Archery Equipment Company, Dept. PB, 13757 64th Street, South Haven, MI 49090; www.winnarchery.com.