

Nostalgia Corner

30 Years Ago ... by Paul Davison

The NFAA Handicap

Thirty years ago the NFAA had not yet used the Flight System for separating skill levels at its sanctioned tournaments. The Class System, based on the highest previously recorded scores, determined whether you were in Class A, Class B, etc. Then, to make it “easier” for the clubs and state associations to “level the playing field,” the NFAA Handicap was made mandatory.

After all, bowlers, golfers, trap shooters, drag racers, and, most notably, indoor archers, used some form of a handicap system in competition. The NFAA decided to adopt the indoor archery handicap system for its field archery games. Depending on how many field or hunter rounds shot in the past 12 months, one’s handicap was computed by taking 80% of the average difference between perfect (560) and (1) best of last 2 scores, (2) best 2 of last 5 scores, or (3) best 3 of last 7 scores.

The 1972 National Outdoor at Ludlow, MA, still used the Class System, but the class breakdown was based on one’s handicap, not previous scores. For example, instead of Class A being from 400 to 560 average high score, Class A was now for handicaps from 0 to 128 — absolutely no difference. Nevertheless, this “new” system blew their minds!

The problem with the NFAA Handicap System was record keeping. No one wanted to do it. NFAA members were issued handicap cards, but entering every score was usually overlooked. League and club secretaries handled the records at the local level, but when an archer went to a national or sectional tournament, his handicap card was often blank.

Personally, I liked the Handicap System. Even prior to 1972, my club



in Ohio had a club handicap shoot every third Sunday ... all year around. The winner each month got to keep the roving trophy until the next month. If you were the first to win it three times, you got to keep the trophy ... forever. Maybe it was because I never missed a shoot (even in the winter), or because I was club secretary and handled the records well, but I managed to win the elegant walnut trophy the third time after only eleven months (see photo).

Since I never shot well enough to win anything based on scratch scores (never got out of Class B), I have an especially warm spot in my heart for the Handicap System. My handicap trophy was the only trophy I kept more than a few years. It has since been reconfigured into a roving trophy for the top “sightless” shooter in the Georgia State Indoor.

The NFAA Handicap rules have remained in the NFAA By-Laws essentially unchanged for thirty years. It’s too bad that nobody cares.

