

# Mounted Archery in South Africa

By Diane Horn

Photographs by MAASA



As with all equine sports, the thrill of competing on the back of half a ton of muscle with a mind of its own only serves to add to the adrenaline rush. Loosing arrows from a bow at top speed from the ground is an admirable skill; doing this from the back of a galloping horse takes this experience to a whole new level.

The sport of horseback (or mounted) archery has its origins in ancient warfare and hunting, when armies of mounted archers fought on the Asian steppes and Native Americans hunted buffalo on the American plains. Today, horseback archery is a popular sport in Asia, Europe and the United States, and its various competitive styles are a reflection of different cultures and traditions. This exciting new sport has now taken hold in South Africa, and continues to grow in participant numbers, and spectator value.

There are a number of disciplines within the sport, such as the Korean (shooting



targets at ground level – 1 one arrow per target at a fast gallop), Hungarian (targets placed two metres above the ground – multiple arrows per target at a slower canter), Qabac (small circular target high in the air – one arrow at high speed) and the Polish/Hunt track (shooting at various sized targets on the left and right hand side as well as upward and downward shots on a cross country course). All of these disciplines demand a high level of skill both as an archer and as a horseman and requires complete trust between horse and rider, as the horse is ridden without any contact on the reins while the rider is shooting.

The equipment and shooting style of each mounted archer differs according to their style and preference, however only traditional bows and arrows are used in accordance with international standards and regulations. Quivers in which to carry arrows are also worn – either mounted on the archer's back,



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the hip or even the leg. In some disciplines, the archer is not allowed to touch an arrow until he has passed the starting line, and success depends on how fast he can get his arrow on to the string and shoot accurately by the time he reaches the first target.

The sport of mounted archery first started in South Africa in 2011, with a small group of enthusiasts who formed the first official club and held competitive events. The Mounted Archery Association of South Africa (MAASA) was born from this a few years later in 2016. The establishment of this national governing body and its affiliation to SAEF (South African Equestrian Federation) means that archers can now obtain provincial and national colours in this sport.

In 2017, MAASA selected the very first National team to participate in the 13th World Horseback Archery Championships in Sokcho, South Korea. The Protea team which consisted of 6 senior and 2 junior riders competed against some of the top archers in the world. They proved that they were a force to be reckoned with when the two junior riders brought home silver and a bronze medals. In 2018, MAASA again sent



a team to the World Championships in Korea, where they fared even better on the world stage, returning with one bronze medal in the senior division, and no less than three golds, one silver and one bronze medal in the junior competition.

Other international competitions were also attended by some of MAASA's top archers in the past



year. In Texas, USA the STAR International Competition was won by Protea senior Jaco Jacobs, who also competed in the Horseback Archery Open World Championships in Pomaz, Hungary in June along with fellow South Africans Johan de Bruto, Deirdre Janse van Rensburg and Daniel Griffin. South Africa finished 7th overall out of a total of 25 nations – a remarkable feat considering that the sport is still new and developing in our country.

MAASA is excited to witness the growth in the sport throughout the country, and there are now Mounted Archery clubs in Gauteng, North West, Free State and the Western Cape. It is especially heartening to see the number of juniors who are taking to the sport; competing in the school leagues equestrian program under SANESA which enables them to earn school points and receive recognition for their hard work and skill.

Regular clinics are held to entice and educate newcomers to the sport. These clinics cover a variety of topics such as equipment, tack and shooting techniques as well as the practical application of these techniques on horseback, archery and horsemanship skills. Monthly training days scheduled at various venues assist archers in furthering their skills and encourage sportsmanship and camaraderie amongst participants. Archers can also participate on an international level with bi-monthly postal matches (held locally) and hosted

by the International Horseback Archery Alliance (IHAA). These competitions serve to help archers measure their progress on an international level and obtain their international ranking.



The format of each competition is determined by IHAA before the time and is the same for each country participating. Scores are then sent to IHAA and they release the rankings based on these results.

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rider. Mounted archery horses are (like their riders) a special breed – calm of spirit, patient and trusting. An archer is truly in harmony with his horse when he can relinquish control and trust his horse to speed up or slow down on command. As in other disciplines, not every horse is suited to the sport, but those that are, prove time and again that when we place our trust in these magnificent animals, we are rewarded with a lifelong bond.

From ancient warfare to modern sport – the spirit of horseback archery continues to grow and enthral spectators and competitors alike, and in doing so proves that until you spread your wings, you will have no idea how far you can fly!

For further details please visit [www.mountedarcheryassociation.co.za](http://www.mountedarcheryassociation.co.za)

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MAASA Competition Schedule 2019			
Date	Competition	Venue	Province
23-Feb	MAASA/SANESA Q1	Potchefstroom ruitersklub	North West
20-Feb	MAASA/SANESA Q1	Hooftprint Club	Free State
24-Feb	MAASA Q1	Griffins Mounted Archery	Western Cape
03-Mar	MAASA/SANESA Q2	Potchefstroom ruitersklub	North West
03-Mar	MAASA/SANESA Q1 + Postal	Shatranj Mounted Archery	Gauteng
13-Mar	MAASA/SANESA Q2	Hooftprint Club	Free State
24-Mar	MAASA Q2	Griffins Mounted Archery	Western Cape
06-Apr	MAASA/SANESA Q3	Hooftprint Club	Free State
13-14 Apr	MAASA/SANESA Q2 & SA Open	Botha-Wil Stalle & Koinos Estates	Gauteng
28-Apr	MAASA Q3	Griffins Mounted Archery	Western Cape
04-May	MAASA/SANESA Q3	Botha-Wil Stalle	Gauteng
11-May	MAASA/SANESA Q4	Hooftprint Club	Free State
18-May	MAASA/SANESA Q3	Potchefstroom ruitersklub	North West
19-May	MAASA/SANESA Q4	Botha-Wil Stalle	Gauteng
19-May	MAASA Q4	Griffins Mounted Archery	Western Cape
01-Jun	Sondela May/Postal	Sondela	Limpopo
01-Jun	SANESA Q5/MAASA Provincials	Hooftprint Club	Free State
09-Jun	MAASA/SANESA Q4	Potchefstroom ruitersklub	North West
22-Jun	MAASA/SANESA Q5	Potchefstroom ruitersklub	North West
22-Jun	MAASA/SANESA Q5	Botha-Wil Stalle	Gauteng
23-Jun	MAASA Provincials	Griffins Mounted Archery	Western Cape
07-Jul	MAASA Provincials	Botha-Wil Stalle	Gauteng
06-Jul	MAASA Provincials: SANESA Q6	Potchefstroom ruitersklub	North West
9-11 Aug	MAASA Nationals	Kings & Prophets	Gauteng
25-Aug	Jul/Aug Postal	Botha-Wil Stalle	Gauteng
15-Sep	Polish Track Day	Koinos Estates	Gauteng
24-Sep	SANESA Nationals	TBC	Gauteng
26-Oct	Sept/Oct Postal	Kings & Prophets	Gauteng
1-3 Nov	Grand Africa Nov/Dec Postal Match	Kings & Prophets	Gauteng
02-Nov	MAASA Year-End Function	TBC	Gauteng