

Mounted Archery Association Revives Heritage Sport

The international nonprofit performs, teaches historic equestrian skill.

Edited Press Release

September 4, 2009

Lajos Kassai on the Competition Course in traditional Magyar dress, using a laminated Hunnish Bow. Photo courtesy Wikipedia
Mounted archery is one of the world's oldest equestrian disciplines; look up into the night sky and you'll still see the ancient Greek archer, Sagittarius, aiming his bow as he gallops among the stars. Today, the Mounted Archery Association of the Americas (MA3) is continuing that tradition and reviving the historic sport throughout the United States, Canada, and South America.

Formed in 2005, the goal of MA3 is to preserve, perform, and pass on the skills and the ideals of mounted archery. "We strive to approach this goal by nurturing the inner character of each archer to strive toward perfection but be patient with one's self and deeply respectful of others as well as to be in harmony with the horse," said MA3 president, Lukas Novotny.

"Mounted archery is a great new challenge for any rider," said MA3 Secretary Helen Donnell. "It requires putting your riding skills to work, while your conscious mind focuses on aiming and shooting the bow. MA3 uses courses from several different national traditions, primarily Korean and Hungarian, which offer a range of difficulties. Close targets at slow speeds offer beginners the satisfaction of quick success, while hitting a target 30 meters behind you at a gallop challenges even the most experienced archer."

MA3's archers come from a variety of backgrounds and all walks of life. At the Florida Horse Park's 2009 Festival of the Horse, visitors watched 11-year-old Eryn Hargreaves, who had only learned to canter a few months earlier, bullseye moving targets at a hand gallop; immediately afterwards, septuagenarians David Gray and Holm Neumann urged their horses to a full gallop and winged arrows into multiple consecutive straw-bale targets. Expert archers Lukas Novotny and Dana Hotko pursued the elusive five-bullseye run, while CCI**** champion Buck Davidson took a break between showjumping rounds to try out the sport for the first time. The archers' horses are equally varied: that weekend alone, two young Mangalarga Marchador stallions, a handful of top-notch polo ponies, an Arab-Andalusian schoolmaster, and a 25-year-old Hackney pony served as steady, trusty steeds.

"Mounted archery is a great second or third career for an older horse, as the physical demands on them are modest," said Donnell. "As with any new experience, each aspect of the sport (the course, the equipment, and the sound and sight of shooting) should be introduced separately, starting at walk or halt. Since reins are dropped on course, it requires and encourages development of responsiveness to the rider's seat, leg, and voice."

You can catch a glimpse of the MA3 riders in Vanessa Wright's touring equestrian exhibit, *The Literary Horse: When Legends Come to Life*. To learn more about the sport of mounted archery and upcoming MA3 workshops, clinics, and events, please visit www.MountedArchery.org.