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On top of the world

Lake of the Pines archer wins World Championship in Wales

BY [TRINA KLEIST](#) AND [BRIAN HAMILTON](#), STAFF WRITERS.



Becky Nelson-Harris first picked up a bow as a seventh-grader attending summer camp back in Minnesota.

And though she enjoyed her first brush with the bow, she didn't pick it up again until five years ago when her sons were trying out the sport at the Nevada County Sportsmen's Club.

Soon, she couldn't resist giving archery a second shot.

Bull's-eye!

Nelson-Harris, a 54-year-old Lake of the Pines resident, has shot her way around the world, and claimed a world championship in women's barebow at a recent competition in Wales. Harris was right on target in earning a gold medal in the World Field Championship, held Sept. 1-6, shooting against 27 other women from around the globe.

Unlike the high-technology Olympic-style archery seen last month, barebow archery does not incorporate telescopic sights.

"It's about winning, but what I really enjoy most is the people," Harris said of the competition. "All the women are very friendly," more so than in Olympic-style archery, also called recurve.

"We all learn from each other," even though different languages make communication more challenging, Harris added.

It was the third time Harris has competed in the international event, which is held every two years. The gold medal qualifies her for the World Games in Taiwan in summer 2009, she said.

Perhaps her previous experiences on the international level was a key in keeping her calm during a gold medal duel with Sweden's Annika Ahlund, who took silver.

The title match came down to the final target — a 50-meter, downhill shot over water — and Nelson-Harris actually had wrapped up the title with her first two shots, earning 11 out of 12 possible points.

Mark Applegate, a fellow Nevada County member of the U.S. team, told her "you've got it!"

But Nelson-Harris would have none of it. She settled back into her final shot, forcing herself to focus just once more. She finished with another five-pointer, a strong closing to her crowning achievement at the competition.

The United States brought home three golds and a bronze medal from the Welsh games, Harris said. In addition to her victory, Jamie Van Natta scored gold in women's compound archery; Rod Menzer won gold and Dave Cousins won bronze in the men's compound event, she added.

Harris's two sons also continue to compete. Nelson Harris, a recent Bear River High School graduate, also competed in the Welsh games, she said.

Alden Harris, is president of his archery club at Texas A&M, has also competed in field archery, which involves shooting in forested settings, at various distances and at distances the archer must estimate on the fly, Harris said.

She and her fellow competitors are working to promote barebow archery among youth, Harris said. After all, it's how she got started.

Having home-schooled her sons, Nelson-Harris took her boys to the Nevada County Sportsmen's Club to try out archery as part of their physical education studies. She watched her son's interest grow to the point they wanted to compete.

"I was just watching on the sideline for along time, bored to death," she said. "I thought I liked this way back (in Minnesota) so I decided to give it a try."

Once her boys were competing, and she was taking them to competitions, she figured why not see how she would measure up against others, as well.

Archery programs for youth and adults are available through Nevada County Sportsmen, a club with facilities on Banner Mountain just east of Nevada City.

"We're trying to have it not be a lost art," Harris said, "because the young people are not going into it."

But those who are going into it in Nevada County are excelling at regional, state, national and — in Nelson-Harris' case — international competitions.

Much of that success, she said, is due to the tremendous teaching talent in the area.

"Charley Washburn and Rusty Mills and all those guys who are members of the club, too many that I can't mention them all, have won national titles," she said. "With the knowledge that is here ... that's a big reason for the success."

Youth programs there include 4-H and Junior Olympic Archery Development, in which Harris teaches. The club also can make referrals for private lessons for children and adults, Harris said.

For more information on archery programs in the area, call the Sportsmen's Club at 265-5131.

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