

## ATA NEWS June 11, 2003

### ESPN Great Outdoor Games - LV Qualifier by Jay Barrs

Four of the nation's top archers qualified for this summer's ESPN Great Outdoor Games by taking the top spots in last week's "Eliminator Qualifier" competition in Las Vegas, the first of three such events to be held this winter and spring.

Claiming first place was Keith Brown of Greensboro, N.C., who edged Mike Slinkard of Johnday, Ore., in a tie-breaker after both men finished with 48 of a possible 54 points in this fast-paced, made-for-TV competition. Brown captured the tie-breaker by winning the "Speed Challenge" station 1.5 seconds faster than Slinkard. The other Vegas qualifiers were Jackie Caudle of Gadsden, Ala., who finished third; and Aya LaBrie of Aurora, Colo., who became the first woman to qualify for the event since the 2001 Great Outdoor Games.

The Las Vegas qualifier was held Feb. 21-23 in conjunction with the World Archery Festival, which is run by the National Field Archery Association. The event took place at the Riviera Hotel and Casino. A field of nearly 80 hopefuls competed in the "Eliminator Qualifier," shooting more than 200 rounds.

The 2003 Great Outdoor Games will be held July 10-13 in Reno-Tahoe, Nevada. The ESPN archery event, which is sponsored by ArrowSport and the Archery Trade Association, is dubbed the "Eliminator" because of its fast-paced, head-to-head, single-elimination format. The ESPN field will feature 16 competitors, 12 of whom earn berths through the qualifying tournaments. The other four spots are reserved for the finalists from the 2002 Great Outdoor Games: gold medalist Randy Hendrix of North Carolina, silver medalist Randy Ulmer of Arizona, bronze medalist Darren Collins of Kansas, and fourth-place finisher Butch Johnson of Connecticut.

Brown, Slinkard and Caudle have become regulars in the ESPN archery competition. All three were part of the 16-archer field that competed in July 2002 at the Great Outdoor Games in Lake Placid, N.Y. In addition, Caudle won the gold medal at the 2000 Great Outdoor Games, and finished 10th in 2002 after narrowly losing to Hendrix, the eventual champ, in the first round. Brown and Slinkard finished 14th and fifth, respectively, at the 2002 games.

Jay Barrs, ArrowSport's director of promotions, supervises the "Eliminator" tournaments. He said spectators witnessed an exciting tournament in Vegas, with many very close matches.

"It was a great tournament," Barrs said. "The archers love it because it's something different and fun to shoot. The spectators love it because, unlike a normal archery tournament, they can yell and cheer for their favorite archers. The 'Speed Challenge' station also made its debut. This shot is an exciting race against the clock, with the archers trying to hit four 4-inch disks, which then release a plate that falls and stops the clock. At the Great Outdoor Games, this will be a head-to-head race between archers to see who hits the four disks the fastest. It should be the event's most exciting station."

LaBrie is no stranger to high-stakes archery competition. In 2002, she was on the United States' field archery team that competed at the FITA World Championships in Australia. Barrs noted that LaBrie usually shoots a recurve bow, but she switched to a compound bow for the Las Vegas qualifier.

The "Eliminator" competition features five action-packed shooting stations. In addition to the new "Speed Challenge" station, four other events are making encore performances this year:

**Stop n Go:** At this station, archers must run to their bow, which is left on the ground at the 20-yard shooting line, pick it up, load an arrow and shoot a 2-inch circle for six points or a 4-inch circle for three points. Then they must run back to the 30-yard line and shoot a second arrow at the 2- or 4-inch circles. Both shots must be taken in less than 30 seconds.

**William Tell:** In this two-shot station, archers shoot a 3-inch apple off a base that swings into place at 20 yards. They have five seconds to shoot the first apple and three seconds to shoot the second.

**The Bermuda Triangle:** This station features two 25-yard shots at a large, wedge-shaped triangle with 4- and 6-inch scoring circles. Both archers shoot one arrow as the target moves left to right, and then reload and shoot again as the target returns right to left. The sequence lasts 20 seconds.

**Thread the Needle:** This 40-yard station requires competitors to shoot as many 4-inch targets as they can in 30 seconds. To complicate matters, the targets are placed at the end of a narrow shooting lane that is flanked by a forest of foam-covered PVC pipes.