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Competing Tooth and Nail

Mark Vanderhoff
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It's easy to imagine many sports stars tossing their first football with their fathers in the back yard or shooting hoops with their friends in the driveway.

But how does a petite yet muscular woman like Peg Engasser end up competing in lumberjack events at this year's ESPN Great Outdoor Games being held at Rancho San Rafael Regional Park this weekend?

"I saw a meet once in college and I thought 'that looks like a ball,' so I tried it and I've been having fun ever since," said Engasser, who joined her college woodsman team as a forestry major.

In fact, few of the competitors in the timber events actually worked as loggers.

The archers, rifle and shotgun shooters and bass and fly fishers, on the other hand, mostly came to their sports out of a love for hunting or fishing.

While many of their stories are different, they all have one thing in common: They have to be some of the best at what they do to be invited to the Great Outdoor Games.

A steady aim

When [Aya La Brie](#) steps up to shoot her bow, she draws on her martial arts experience to block out the crowds, relax and focus on her target.

"It's fear that destroys a lot of archers," she said.

The 31-year-old from Aurora, Colo., picked up good form and mental fortitude while studying martial arts in Japan for 10 years.

While there, a bad landing after being thrown agitated some previous injuries. After seven months of rehabilitation, she came back and won the Japanese title, but the old injuries came back harder.

Looking for a sport that drew on her upper-body strength, she channeled her competitive drive into archery.

Today, [La Brie](#) is a champion archer who combines the ancient Japanese art of archery called Kyudo with modern-day Olympic bows.

She just made the U.S. women's national team and will travel to the World Target Championships after the Great Outdoor Games.

"People said I was a natural because I have good hand-to-eye coordination, but it actually took a lot of practice," she said.

