

Archery book review:

Title: The Simple Art of Winning

Author: Rick McKinney

Publication date: 1996. By Leo Planning, Inc. Tokyo, Japan

Purchased from: Lancaster Archery Supply via web site

Price: book \$24.99, shipping and handling \$6.95, \$31.94 total

David Twigg and Sue McGee recommended this archery book to me. I looked up the book at Amazon.com and could not find it. I tried Lancaster Archery Supply, and used their search area and found the book. According to the web site, they had only one copy left, and I got it. The book is no longer printed, but copies are available, more so from the UK archery web sites. It is a book worth the effort to get. This book deals only with recurve archery.

When one opens the book the first thing one finds are nine photos of McKinney in the classic nine step to shooting, from nocking the arrow to the final follow through. The next four pages are sequence photos of McKinney at pre-draw to the final follow through, from eight different angles. McKinney's philosophy of the book is to keep it simple, and to see what good form looks like from different angles. Not just photos of himself, but in later sections he points out what other world champions do, some of which he thinks is better than his, and others which he thinks are not as good as could be. The secret for winning and improving in archery is on page 55: "The biggest secret to archery is staying as close to basic archery as possible." Through out the book, basic good solid form is stressed over and over. If there is a problem, look first at your form. Arrows shooting high, look at your bow arm. Perhaps you are flinching up at the last second. McKinney says that most errors in archery occur in two basic places: the bow arm not being held steady, or the follow through, that is the string release is incorrect.

Basic archery form is emphasized in the first section which is along the lines of this is how it is done. The middle section underlines the basic form and give more analysis as to why it is done a particular way. More helpful are the paragraphs which explain what happen if you don't use good basic form. One short example: the bow arm, "If the arm doesn't move during the shot, the arrow is given more of an opportunity to hit gold than anything else. Most people believe that the release is the most critical but with the recurve bow the bow arm is. You have probably seen many different releases by the same archer yet still they shot well. The bow arm was as solid as a rock before, during and after the shot. All champions have had a tremendous bow arm." (Page 30) Another example is the release and the follow through. McKinney states: "Letting go of the arrow can be a very wonderful or frustrating experience. When focusing on letting go, it becomes a real challenge to do it right. When concentrating on the follow through, the release becomes automatic." (Page 50)

The book also contains an excellent section on the mental aspects of the sport, also stated in simple and understandable terms. There is a great section on equipment in the later half of the book. This section is slightly outdated, as equipment has changed and improved over the past ten years. The basics are still good. There is a whole section on weight training, something that I hold near and dear to my heart. As a weight trainer, the exercises recommended are basic, yet effective for archery.

I found the book very readable, finished it in two sittings. I am not sure if my comprehension is better because of all the other books I have read, or due to McKinney's excellent prose, or the combination of the two. I would recommend this book for any archer. The hard part will be finding a copy. David Twigg stated that McKinney may put out a revised edition with updates in the equipment section, but until that time, the 1996 edition is all we have. If you can find it, buy it!