

INDUCTEE PROFILE



Rick Stonebraker was a four-time All-American and two-time NCAA champion archer.

On target

From early age, Stonebraker focused on marksmanship

By John Hartsock
Altoona Mirror

Rick Stonebraker made his mark in archery on the national and world levels, but the Tyrone native got his start in the sport as a teenager around the mountains of Blair County.

"Back home in Pennsylvania during archery season in the 1960s, my stepfather, John W. Stonebraker, and my uncle Dan and some of their friends would come home and tell me about some of their deer hunting stories," Rick said. "I was about 15 or

16, and they put a bow in my hand and challenged me to do better than they did."

The successful response to that type of challenge is part of the personal fabric that Rick Stonebraker feels makes for the outstanding archer he would eventually become. Stonebraker — a 1968 graduate of Tyrone Area High School — is one of five native Blair County sports icons who will be ushered into the Blair County Sports Hall of Fame.

"To be successful in this sport, you have to be a little bit of a

showoff," Stonebraker, 59, said. "You have to be a little bit aggressive, and you have to enjoy the limelight. I think I had the tools (to succeed) right off the bat.

"(My stepfather) taught me how to shoot a rifle and I was good at that. Then, I was taught how to shoot a pistol, and I was good at that. I was (also) an excellent dart-thrower, so the hand-eye coordination was there."

And Stonebraker also had what the sport demanded from a concentration standpoint.



Rick soaked up the atmosphere as an archery judge at the 1996 Olympic Games.

"Concentration and good focus are very important," he said. "Your focus has to be back at the shooting line, not at the target. If you do everything correctly at the shooting line and in your form, the target takes care of itself."

Stonebraker began shooting competitively as a young man after a co-worker at a Tyrone shirt factory got him indoctrinated into the more formal aspects of the sport of archery.

"I had been shooting for a couple of years, and I was working at

the Big Yank Shirt Factory in Tyrone, where they made pants," Stonebraker recalled. "One of my co-workers was an archer, and invited me out to the Chief Logan archery range. I started out in the bear bow instinctive division where there are no sights (on the bow), and I moved up the ranks.

"I put a sight on my bow, and I moved up to the "A" class, and attended any kind of competition that I could find," Stonebraker added. "I could have stayed local and won a lot of stuff, but I always went statewide and nationwide, and did some of my best shooting — even though I didn't always win. I found that it was more worthwhile to shoot a good score (against bigger and better competition) than it was to win

all the time."

Nonetheless, once Stonebraker began branching out, he enjoyed his share of personal success.

Stonebraker was a four-time All-American archer as a college student at both Penn State and Texas A&M. At the ages of 37 and 38, he won the NCAA championship twice at Texas A&M in 1987 and 1988 — setting the record for being the oldest national archery champion, which he still holds to this day. He won one indoor and one outdoor national championship at Texas A&M.

Stonebraker was also an NCAA runnerup during his two years as a student at Penn State in the early 1970s. In 1974, Stonebraker was runnerup in the World Field championship — losing the world championship by just one point.

Living in Houston since 1990 after moving from Pennsylvania to Texas in 1981 in order to "get out of the snow," Stonebraker has won 39 Texas state archery titles in outdoor and



Stonebraker bio

Sport: Archery
High school: Tyrone
College: Penn State, Texas A&M
Hall of Fame achievement: Four-time All-American archer, two-time NCAA championship (1987-88).
Current residence: Houston, Texas

indoor competition combined. He has captured five Pennsylvania state titles and he has won a total of 13 national titles in various organizations. Stonebraker set 12 world records in masters archery competition, and he won the world masters championship in 2002 in Melbourne, Australia.

Stonebraker — whose mother, Elfriede, 81, still lives in Tyrone — helped get the archery program at Texas A&M off the ground, mentoring the university's younger archers and helping the program win 11 straight NCAA championships.

"There was an archery program at Texas A&M when I arrived there, but it was more like just a glorified archery class," Stonebraker said. "After I won two national titles there, Texas A&M became the place to go for archers who were coming out of high school and wanting to continue the sport in college."

Stonebraker also served as one of the archery judges at the 1996 Summer Olympic Games in Atlanta.



Rick was introduced to archery by family members at the age of 15.

"Because I was a top shooter, I made a very good judge," Stonebraker said. "I knew how shooters think, and they never gave me a hard time."

Stonebraker is a member of the Texas State Archery Association — an organization which he helped found in 1983. Stonebraker is the former

president of the organization, while Tom Barker, 52, is the organization's former vice president.

Barker and his two grown children, a son and daughter, are all archers who developed in the sport under Stonebraker's tutelage.

"Everybody who has been in archery for the last 30 years knows what he's done for the sport," Barker said of Stonebraker. "His contributions to the sport as a mentor to young archers, their parents, coaches, judges and anybody else involved in archery might be even more significant than his numerous personal achievements in archery."

Helping to bolster the talents of future world-class archers is one of Stonebraker's biggest passions in the Texas Archery Association.

"We have an extensive archery program for indoor, outdoor and field shooting, and we foster a junior program that helps develop young kids in the sport of archery," he said.



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