

WELCOME TO E

JIM ALLSHOUSE
& JACK BOWMAN

Bear[®]
ARCHERY

Plotting a new and improved course for a company is rarely an easy task. It takes objectivity, a better plan and focus.

THE NEW BEAR

In 2003, Escalade Sports bought Bear Archery. A lot of people wondered why. Bear had struggled for years to maintain its once prominent position in the archery industry. The company, which was founded in the late 1940s, had weathered periodic buyouts, disinterested owners and questionable management decisions. Yet, through it all, there was something special about Bear Archery. Maybe it was the original stewardship of founder and bowhunting icon Fred Bear. Maybe it was the legacy created by nearly 60 years in the archery business. Maybe it was the simple fact that so many of today's archers and bowhunters had gotten their start with a Bear bow. Something kept Bear Archery afloat.

"When we first began looking at Bear Archery," says Bear Archery President Jim Allshouse, "we had all of those concerns, and we also recognized those

BY BILL & SHERRY KRENZ



BEAR COUNTRY.

saving graces. We tried to be objective. Yes, Bear Archery has had troubles. But to its credit, there was a mystique about Bear Archery that was undeniable. The more we investigated the prospect, the more we saw the possibilities and how Bear Archery might dovetail into our own archery heritage and expertise.”

What many don't know is that Escalade Sports was originally incorporated as Indian Industries, and that Indian Industries grew out of Indian Archery, an archery-equipment manufacturer that was founded in 1927. Today, Escalade Sports is one of the world's leading manufacturers and distributors of pool tables, table-tennis tables and game tables, along with gear for basketball, darts, fitness and playgrounds. But at the company's core is archery. For decades, Indian/Escalade has been a key supplier of youth, camp and school archery products. In the 1980s, the company even launched a line of high-performance adult compound bows that went under the brand name of XI. Escalade's archery background was long and well-founded.

“Business acquisitions, however, shouldn't be founded on compatibility and mystique alone,” adds Allshouse, who has been in the archery industry since 1985. “There has to be more. In the end, our decision to purchase Bear Archery was based on the existence of four key elements. The first was the enduring iconic nature of Fred Bear. Many called Fred Bear the Father of Modern Bowhunting, and archers worldwide revered his memory. Even significant numbers of non-archers had heard of Fred Bear.



ABOVE:
The Gainesville, Florida, facility is Bear Archery's manufacturing arm. Shown in the company's Florida warehouse are (left to right) President Jim Allshouse, Gainesville Operations Manager Neil Byce and CEO Bob Keller.

BELOW: The new Bear Archery management team includes (left to right) Manager of Product Development Darik Bollig, Senior Product Manager Mark Wenberg, Director of Business Development Jack Bowman, National Sales Manager Jeff Pease and Marketing Manager Ross Rinehart.





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“THE DECISION TO PURCHASE BEAR ARCHERY WAS BASED ON THE EXISTENCE OF FOUR KEY ELEMENTS. THE FIRST WAS THE ENDURING ICONIC NATURE OF FRED BEAR.”

No other archer, before or since, has climbed that pedestal.

“Pivoting off of that notoriety was the power of the Bear Archery brand. Bear could still open business doors. Brand recognition was remarkably strong, and archers still clamored for quality, affordable Bear bows and related archery accessories.

“Third was the existence of substantial intellectual properties in the Bear Archery portfolio. Key among those were patents for the one-cam system, compression-molded bow limbs and a host of archery products and processes.

“The fourth element was undeniable business potential. We felt that if the first three things were welded together with a much improved business plan and a clear implementation focus, Bear Archery could rise to all-new heights.”

An objective analysis, a better plan and a clear focus gave Bear Archery new life.

A big part of the new plan for Bear Archery was a renewed attention on the well-being of its dealers and consumers.

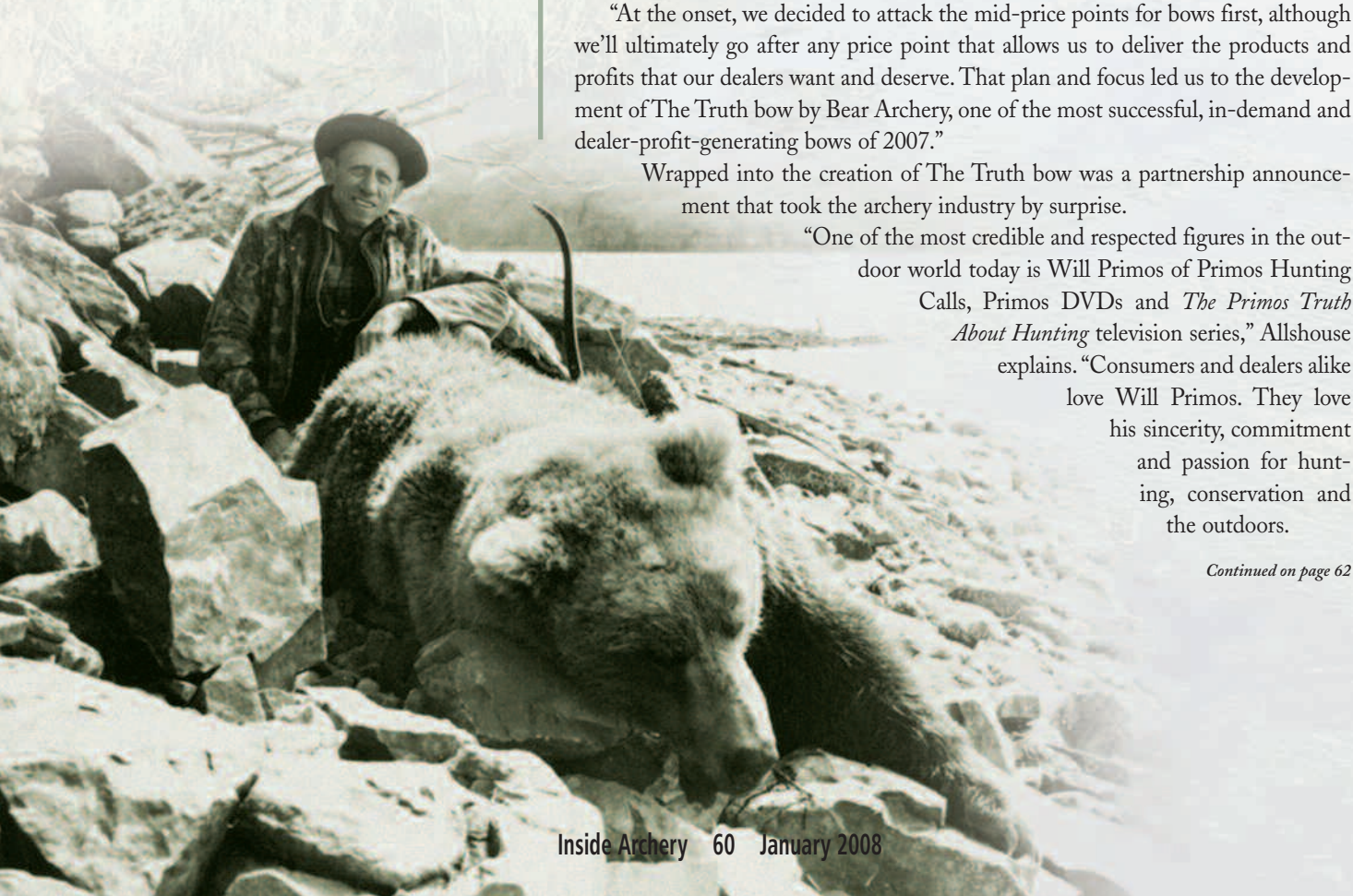
“To begin the rebuilding process,” says Bear Archery Director of Business Development Jack Bowman, “we knew that we had to create and offer the best bows with the best technologies and performance at a particular price point. Going hand in hand with that, those bows had to also offer our dealers the best margins possible. Maximizing dealer margins per bow and overall dealer profits from Bear Archery became a huge part of our plan. We felt very strongly about the livelihood of our dealers. For Bear to be successful, its dealers had to be satisfied and successful. That would happen when the demand for Bear bows was strong again, and dealers made a satisfying amount of money from each Bear bow sale.

“At the onset, we decided to attack the mid-price points for bows first, although we’ll ultimately go after any price point that allows us to deliver the products and profits that our dealers want and deserve. That plan and focus led us to the development of The Truth bow by Bear Archery, one of the most successful, in-demand and dealer-profit-generating bows of 2007.”

Wrapped into the creation of The Truth bow was a partnership announcement that took the archery industry by surprise.

“One of the most credible and respected figures in the outdoor world today is Will Primos of Primos Hunting Calls, Primos DVDs and *The Primos Truth About Hunting* television series,” Allshouse explains. “Consumers and dealers alike love Will Primos. They love his sincerity, commitment and passion for hunting, conservation and the outdoors.

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“What they may not know about Will is that he had long idolized Fred Bear. In fact, Will likes to tell the story about how he would hurry home after church as a very young boy so as not to miss segments of the *American Sportsman* television program that featured Fred Bear. From those very early times, bowhunting and a reverence for Fred Bear and all that Bear had accomplished were ingrained in Will Primos.

“So when we presented Will with the opportunity to help us regrow Bear Archery, he was instantly interested. But at the same time, he and his team at Primos Hunting Calls were also a bit skeptical. Bear Archery? Will was popular enough that he could have chosen to partner with any bow company out there.

“We had to prove ourselves. We laid out our vision and plan for a new Bear Archery. We talked about our focus, our passion for the sport, our background in the industry and our commitment to aid our dealers. We also invited Will and his Team Primos members to help us design the new bows that would mark a new and improved path for Bear Archery.

“In 2006, Will Primos and his team signed a 10-year promotional partnership with Bear Archery. We announced it to the world, and we immediately went to work on the new bows. In the coming months, we repeatedly paired talented Bear Archery engineers with Will and his energetic bowhunting staff. We started from scratch and designed the first bow of the new Bear Archery era—The Truth bow.

“The Truth, which was introduced early in 2007, was a collaborative effort between Bear Archery and Team Primos. The Truth quickly proved to be an unusually smooth, quiet and vibration-free bow packed with high-tech features, an innovative new look, pleasing speed and much-welcomed dealer margins.

“In fact, The Truth by Bear Archery looked and shot so good that consumers initially guessed that it must retail for at least \$700 to \$800. Bowhunters, however, were soon thrilled to learn that The Truth sold for far less.”



Charged with Bear Archery product development are Product Development Engineer Ben Blosser, Manager of Product Development Darik Bollig, Design Engineer Jeff Wassmer and Associate Product Manager Jason Pickerill.

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Specializing in customer service at Bear Archery are (left to right) Scott Hayes, Supervisor Kristene Davis, Gary Lewis and J.R. Nedlinger.





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Quite suddenly, Bear Archery had a huge hit on their hands.

“To be honest,” says Allshouse, “The Truth far exceeded even our high expectations. Consumers clamored for it and dealers embraced it. It was a bow that satisfied everyone. The Truth easily met our design goal of performance-for-value. In addition, The Truth name, lent to us by Primos, added instant credibility.

“The entire project signaled the reemergence of Bear Archery as a prominent player in the archery industry. The word on the street quickly became that The Truth by Bear Archery was a bow that many dealers and consumers preferred over bows that sold for a whole lot more.”

To celebrate that big step forward, Bear Archery redesigned its company logo for 2007.

“We wanted the new logo to symbolize the new Bear Archery,” Bowman says. “The new logo is bolder, brighter and more aggressive.”

“Not a company to rest on our laurels,” adds Bowman, who has been in the archery industry since 1982, “Bear Archery has plans that are even bigger for 2008. There’s a whole new lineup of compound bows, including The Truth 2 bow. The Truth 2 is the result of months and months of design and testing work. The Truth 2 features a new limb for improved limb loading, a faster-and-smoother cam design, Dual Arc String Suppressors, machined-aluminum pivoting limb cups and Winner’s Choice custom strings and cables. Imagine all that at a consumer- and dealer-pleasing retail of just \$649.

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Bear Archery products are produced at the company’s Gainesville, Florida, manufacturing facility. The current workforce in Gainesville has increased 300% since Bear was purchased by Escalade in 2003



TOP LEFT: Design Engineer Brian Adams tests a new Bear Archery bow with a high-speed camera.

TOP RIGHT: Bear Archery Product Development Engineer Sean Gordon works on the tune of The Truth 2, Bear’s flagship compound bow for 2008.





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traditional-archery accessories, things like backquivers, leather armguards, shooting gloves and bow cases specifically designed for Bear Archery's recurves and longbows. All compound-bow accessories would fall under the Trophy Ridge Accessories banner."

Revitalized and revamped businesses typically require new people, and the new Bear Archery has carefully blended new employees with old hands.


"The right people are still the heart of everything," says Allshouse. "It's hard to innovate and move forward unless you have the right, team-oriented people that catch the vision and push for improvement. At the new Bear, we're very big on team-oriented solutions and employees who understand the archery market, our dealers and the end-users."

One of the interesting developments at the new Bear Archery is facilities in both Evansville, Indiana, and Gainesville, Florida. The Evansville, Indiana facility, (also home to Escalade Sports), efficiently houses Bear Archery's marketing, sales, customer service, product management, engineering, product development and all administrative functions. The Gainesville, Florida, facility is Bear Archery's crucial manufacturing arm.

"Since we purchased Bear Archery in 2003," says Allshouse, "we've increased the size of the labor force at the Gainesville facility by 300 percent. We've also made significant capital improvements in that facility."

Bear Archery is a longstanding archery company that today is brand new. It's charting a new course for itself, complete with a new approach to product development, dealer success and consumer satisfaction. It's demonstrating a passion for brand building, team solutions and innovative business practices.

"It's really quite something to sit here and watch our teams build a new Bear Archery," concludes Allshouse. "There's so much passion for the brand and enthusiasm for the sport being combined with concerns for our dealers and the archery industry as a whole. It's almost as though Fred Bear is looking over our shoulders, and we are bound and determined to get it right."

For more information on Bear Archery, Circle #106,  log onto beararcheryproducts.com or call (800) 694-9494.

The guys and gals at Bear Archery know bows and bowhunting. Clockwise from top, Dan Massimillo, Jeff Pease, Jack Bowman and Kristene Davis pose with recent bucks and a cagey gobbler.

