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Tethrd: The Busiest Booth at ATA 2020

Hundreds of exhibitors showcased their latest and greatest archery products at ATA 2020. In the author's opinion, the Tethrd booth was busiest of all.

 By Dave Maas

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Each January I enjoy traveling from my home state of Minnesota to attend the annual Archery Trade Association (ATA) Show, which was recently held at the Indiana Convention Center in Indianapolis. As an avid bowhunter, I'm interested in seeing the latest new products that can help my shooting and hunting, and it's great to connect with old friends in the archery industry and meet new ones.



As senior editor for *Archery Business* and *Bowhunting World*, I spent three days walking the ATA 2020 show floor and meeting with numerous manufacturers. During my travels, I couldn't help but notice the large collection of people gathered in front of the Tethrd booth, number 429. In fact, to avoid getting stuck in a crowd of gawkers, I began to avoid row 400 entirely when walking from point A to point B.



No matter what time the author walked near the Tethrd booth during ATA 2020, it was packed with show attendees.

If you haven't heard of Tethrd, it's a company that manufactures tree saddles. Never heard of a tree saddle? [Click here](#) for a quick video demonstration. The tree saddle concept isn't new; in fact, it dates back at least 30 years. But thanks to online content producers such as The Hunting Public and DIY Sportsman, tree saddles have rocketed in popularity.

I haven't had the chance to try a tree saddle yet, but will this fall. I bowhunt public land in Wisconsin and South Dakota, and a tree saddle matched with three or four climbing sticks would enable me to climb any tree quickly and quietly, then hunt immediately.

Note: In many states, on public land it's illegal to use screw-in treesteps, leave hang-on portable stands and ladder stands overnight, or cut shooting lanes. Tree saddles and climbing sticks allow bowhunters to set up immediately on the hottest deer sign, and the ropes and tree saddle platform enable hunters to slightly adjust their position in a tree to find open shots.

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Tethrd Booth Observations

Because I enjoy the YouTube content produced by The Hunting Public, I had plans to visit the Tethrd booth during ATA 2020. In fact, I swung by their booth a few times when I had openings in my meeting schedule, and every time I did so it was packed with people. Tethrd had two large tree trunks (think telephone poles) on display that allowed Tethrd staff to help visitors try tree saddles. Sure, the foot platforms were only 18 inches off the ground instead of 18 feet, but everything else about the tree saddle testing experience was realistic.

I wasn't surprised by the interest in Tethrd because I know I'm not the only one watching hunting content on YouTube. Data such as number of views is readily available for all to see when you check out a YouTube video.

Tethrd was smart to have their booth set up in a way for visitors to test tree saddles because anyone who sees one in use online wonders if it is comfortable. Hunters also want to know if they can shoot their bow effectively from a tree saddle, and Tethrd wisely had two AccuBows (archery training devices) on hand for use. Visitors could draw an AccuBow and move around the tree just as they would in a real hunting scenario.



One Shocking Surprise

As I said, I wasn't surprised by the Tethrd booth traffic, but I was shocked to learn Tethrd operates on a direct-to-consumer business model. Think about that for a second: The busiest booth at ATA 2020 — an industry-only show — was packed with retailers who can't even purchase Tethrd product for their stores.

I lost track of the number of dealers I heard ask, “What is the MSRP for the entire Tethrd system, and what is dealer cost?”

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The response from Tethrd booth staff was always the same: “Right now we’re consumer-direct, but we’re exhibiting here at ATA to gauge dealer interest.”

From persons I talked to who were waiting their turn to test a tree saddle, consumer demand for Tethrd product has been very high. More than once someone said, “A buddy of mine ordered a tree saddle last fall, and he had to wait a month to get it.”

Will Tethrd change its business model to include dealers? I have no idea, but I’m working to schedule a meeting with one of the Tethrd owners to find out more. Obviously, if Tethrd is having trouble now keeping up with consumer demand (online and phone sales only), they will have to increase production capability before adding dealer orders to the mix.

With limited production, Tethrd is benefitting now by its consumer-direct business model; they can charge full price for their system and not have to worry about dealer pricing, terms, etc. That said, having their product on display in archery shops across North America would certainly expand their reach to hunters who don’t spend time watching hunting shows on YouTube.

In addition, many bowhunters (me included) want to test a tree saddle before making a purchase, so the idea of buying one online without ever using one is risky. Cost of the entire system (foot platform, tree saddle, ropes, belts, carabiners, etc.) is about \$500, so it’s not a small investment. Note: This figure doesn’t include climbing sticks, which can be expensive.

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The good news for archery dealers, even if Tethrd continues to be consumer-direct only, is other manufacturers are sure to capitalize on the tree saddle craze. I spent an hour in the Lone Wolf Custom Gear booth, and there I learned about its new saddle called The Ghost. Unfortunately, they didn’t have a tree trunk set up for show attendees to test the product, but I’m sure that will change by ATA 2021. A couple other ATA exhibitors told me they are working on tree saddle designs, too. Cost to the consumer should come down as more companies enter the tree saddle market, and dealers will certainly have a few brands from which to choose.

In my opinion, tree saddles make a lot of sense for archery shops, even small ones. Unlike pop-up ground blinds and full-size treestands, tree saddles take up little room in a store. And because the entire tree saddle system includes numerous components, with many options for your style of hunting, dealers can expect add-on purchases over time.

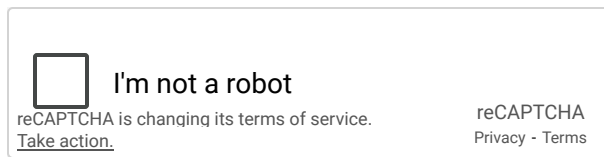
Smart dealers will mount a 12-inch-diameter wooden pole in the corner of their store that serves as a test tree so customers can try out a saddle. Smart dealers will also schedule seminars on the subject of tree saddle hunting. Even better, dealers should work to schedule a seminar by a bowhunter with a large YouTube and social media following; that way, the speaker can drive traffic to your store with their online influence. In your promotion of the event, offer a \$100 prize drawing toward purchase of a saddle system.

Think about it: Winter is probably a bit slow in your archery shop. Wouldn't it be nice to fill your shop on a Saturday afternoon with 50 to 100 seminar attendees (many who would be new to your store) who want to learn more about tree saddles?

Look for future *Archery Business* articles as I learn more about whether Tethrd decides to add dealers to the mix, and I'll also keep you posted as other manufacturers add tree saddles to their offerings.

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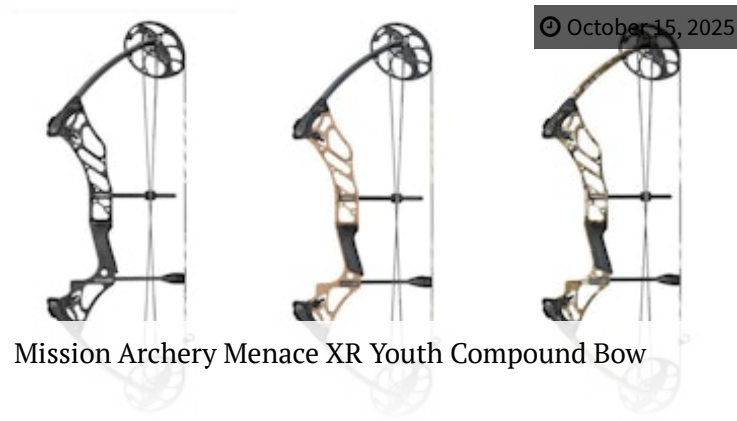
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