

Product Review: GrizzlyStik Sitka Arrow Shafts

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I admit that I am perfectionist when it comes to building and tuning arrows. I constantly find myself reading, researching, and experimenting with a variety of shaft materials and designs in an effort to maximize the performance of my bows as hunting weapons and target range tack drivers. As a result, I have literally dozens of arrows all meticulously built and tuned for each bow I shoot.

So, why bother to continue with the experimentation you may ask? Simple. The body of knowledge in archery is advancing and at least one arrow shaft manufacturer, Ed Schlieff of Alaska Bowhunting Supply, has read the current research, applied it to the physics of arrow flight and penetration, and produced what I believe is a top notch shaft.

My review of the GrizzlyStik Sitka began when I opened the shipping package to see two six packs of Sitka's. What struck me about the shafts at first glance was that they resembled no other shaft I had ever seen on the market. First, the color of the shaft is a rich dark brown with gold lettering. Next, the multi-directional woven carbon fiber making up the shaft was readily visible under the aesthetically pleasing glossy finish. Already, these shafts were differentiating themselves from the pack.

I carefully examined one of the shafts before I began the process of weighing them for consistency and fletching them for tuning to one of my bows. What was immediately apparent is that the shafts were a continuous taper design, a design that creates a high front of center (FOC) or weight-forward shaft. This weight forward design has been proven through the recent, ground-breaking research of Dr. Ed Ashby, to be a critical ingredient in maximizing penetration on game animals. A quick review of some of the principles of physics tells part of the reason why.

When weight is disproportionately placed in the front of the arrow shaft, it effortlessly pulls the balance of the shaft behind it. For a visual depiction of what I am saying, picture a piece of string taped to a baseball. Imagine throwing the baseball and seeing that the momentum of the ball simply pulls the string along behind. The ball does all the work and the string, which has little relative weight to the ball, follows along because there is negligible drag. This lack of rear drag means the arrow recovers more quickly from paradox and upon entering the target, penetrates deeper because the momentum is moving the shaft forward and not side to side.

But all design issues aside, what is important to me is not how a shaft *should* work, but how it *does* work. So I continued my review of the Sitka with the intent of putting these interesting new arrows through their paces.

First, I weighed each shaft on my digital arrow scale and was pleasantly surprised to discover that on full length shafts the variance in weight was less than seven grains between individual shafts. This spoke well of Alaska Bowhunting Supply's quality control, so I was anxious to fletch up some test arrows and head to my backyard target range.

The arrows were fletched using crest wraps and three helical 5 ½” shield cut feathers. Inserts used were the 60 grain brass inserts supplied and I temporarily glued one into the front of a shaft until I could determine the proper length for my finished arrows.

Testing with several of my traditional bows of varying poundage and with points of various weights revealed that leaving the shafts full length produced the best result with most of my bows. That extra length kicked up the final arrow weight to a total of 570 grains including a 175 grain point.

I headed back to my archery range with three broadhead tipped arrows and began to shoot. The included picture was the second group I shot with the Sitka shafts. It was achieved using a 42# O.L. Adcock ACS longbow from a distance of 20 yards. Needless to say, I was impressed. If these shafts performed equally well on game, which I hoped to determine in an upcoming hunt, they would surely prove themselves as invaluable tools for the hunting archer.

Several weeks went by before I had an opportunity to shoot at a mature deer with the Sitka's. But one October afternoon while sitting quietly in my tree stand, I finally had my chance at a fat North Dakota whitetail doe that had come to browse the native vegetation near my location.

When I released the string from the recurve bow that sent the GrizzlyStik Sitka on its way, the big doe truly didn't know what hit her. The arrow achieved full penetration and accomplished everything I had hoped it would by inflicting a lethal blow on the beautiful prairie whitetail. I was exceptionally pleased.

Since the dawn of time, humans have used arrows for the expressed purpose of killing game. In order to accomplish this objective, an arrow must be able to shoot where the archer is aiming and deliver maximum momentum when it impacts tissue. On both of these measures, my qualitative review of the GrizzlyStik Sitka shaft renders very positive results. And for those of us who shoot low poundage bows, this is particularly important, as achieving maximum performance from our equipment is not an option, but an ethical imperative.

Like any quality product, the Sitka is not cheap. A package of six shafts currently retails for \$59.95, but if like me you are interested in the very best products to improve your effectiveness, it is money well spent. The Sitka will accommodate spine ranges from 40 to 55 pounds and shopping is convenient using Alaska Bowhunting Supply's online store.

Because of their impressive performance, my Sitka's have already been paired with several of my favorite bows. And although I still may get the urge to experiment with various offerings from time to time, the Sitka has earned a permanent place among my preferred hunting and target shafts. Given that I am indeed an archery perfectionist, I couldn't ask for much more than that!

You can find Alaska Bowhunting Supply on the web at www.alaskabowhunting.com .

