

# Horse archery right on target

By KEIRA JENKINS

SA

RIDING a horse can be daunting, especially if you have to drop the reins and use a bow and arrow, but this is exactly

what Adelaide woman Bianca Stawiarski does.

She said shooting from horseback can improve the confidence of riders who've had a bad fall, and even new riders.

So the mother of two started her own business, Empowerment4Riders, which uses a variety of activities including horse archery to build confidence in riders.

Ms Stawiarski said this tied in well with her work as a women's transformational coach, where she helps women who feel "overwhelmed, under-appreciated or vulnerable to feel strong and important".

"There was definitely a need for it in South Australia," she told the *Koori Mail*.

"I started doing it as volunteer work because I got a kick out of seeing people grow. At first people are very scared to let go of the reins.

"Most of the women I work with transform. You can see their confidence build and they become Amazons.

"They tap into their inner fire that they might not have known existed or not realised was there. That's a powerful thing to do."

Although Ms Stawiarski has her own suite of achievements in the horse archery field, including being the first Aboriginal competitor to represent Australia in the United States, in 2014, she said the idea of letting go of the reins was daunting at first.

"I thought I'd give it a go," she said.

"It looked interesting and I thought 'bring it on'. But it was



Bianca Stawiarski competes in horse archery. "As long as you give it a go you're on the right track. There are so many possibilities with horse archery," she says.

scary at first to trust myself and trust my horse enough to let go of the reins.

"But it's really weird when you do let go and stop fussing with the reins; the horse just loves it. My horse became a war horse. He thought it was pretty awesome.

"And the people are all really supportive. There's no 'that was a bad shot'. It's more 'you'll get it next time'."

Both of Ms Stawiarski's

teenage children are also keen horse archers. "My daughter can do anything she puts her mind to on horseback," she said.

"And my son is just learning to ride and shoot, but it's amazing for them both to tap into their inner fire.

"The school also gets a few Indigenous boarders and I bring them out to ride. These kids sometimes haven't ridden before and they love it.

"Kids think they're invincible.

Whereas with the work I've been doing I'm helping people get back into the saddle."

Ms Stawiarski said she hopes horse archery grows as a sport, and more people take it up to boost their confidence.

"I'd like to see it grow, and I'd like it to be a sport that people know about," she said.

"The fantastic thing about horse archery is that you can just jump on a horse in jeans. You don't need \$300 jodhpurs, or all

the right gear like you do in dressage, so hopefully it can break down the socioeconomic barriers that you find in a lot of equestrian sports.

"As long as you give it a go you're on the right track. There are so many possibilities with horse archery.

"The women that come to me feel so good and strong, they transform. It takes just 15 minutes with a bow and arrow for them to feel a change."