Quad X Vanes vs. Iron Will Vane Design Principles: A Comparative Analysis of Drag, Stabilization, and Rotation

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Date: June 2025

Abstract
This report compares the empirical findings from the Quad X vane series testing with theoretical and computational data from the University of Colorado Boulder and Iron Will Outfitters. Primary parameters evaluated include velocity loss over distance, rotational behavior (RPS), aerodynamic drag (C_D), and stabilization dynamics. The analysis demonstrates that small-profile vanes such as the Flex Fletch Quad X maintain aerodynamic efficiency even at steep helical offsets, with minimal velocity penalties and improved stability characteristics.

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1. Introduction

Arrow fletching design affects aerodynamic drag, rotation rate, and stabilization. Traditional assumptions suggest that higher helical offsets increase drag, which may lead to greater velocity loss. However, small vanes with low profiles may mitigate this trade-off. This study evaluates these effects using real-world test data from Flex Fletch Quad X vanes and published CFD analyses from Iron Will.

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2. Methods

2.1 Quad X Testing (PNL Testers)

- **Shaft:** Black Eagle Carnivore 350, 26.5” C2C
- **FOC:** 16.5%

- **Total weight:** 380.5 gr
- **Offsets:** 1°, 3°, 5° (measured with a 5C spin indexer)
- **Velocity:** 285.3 fps ± 0.5
- **Instrumentation:** LabRadar, paper tuning, index tracking
- **Metrics:** RPS, RPM, deviation recovery, and velocity at intervals from 0 to 60 yards

2.2 Iron Will Testing (CU Boulder Senior Design Project)

- CFD simulations with SolidWorks Flow Simulation
- Experimental indoor/outdoor shots at 40 yards using Hoyt RX5
- Variables: vane height, shape, fletch angle, and profile thickness

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3. Results

3.1 Velocity Loss Over Distance

Helical Offset	V0 (fps)	V60 (fps)	Total Loss	% Loss
1°	286.2	260.0	26.2	-9.15%
3°	287.0	260.0	27.0	-9.41%
5°	286.0	259.0	27.0	-9.44%

Observation: Differences in velocity loss between 1° and 5° are negligible (<1 fps).

3.2 Rotational Behavior

Helical Offset	RPS (V0)	RPM (V0)
1°	24.9	1495.7
3°	48.5	2912.0
5°	63.7	3819.4

Observation: Increased helical offset significantly boosts spin rate, enhancing gyroscopic stability.

3.3 Stabilization (Paper Test)

Paper tears were tracked from 1 to 15 yards. Primary deviation peaks occurred at 3 yards, followed by a secondary deviation peak near 5 yards for all setups. The 5° offset showed reduced overall deviation and a smoother stabilization curve.

Key Finding: Higher spin rate reduced lateral deviation, though recovery time (distance) was not drastically shortened.

3.4 Drag and Aerodynamic Efficiency (C_D)

According to Iron Will's data:

- Taller vanes produce lower drag coefficients (0.77 vs. 0.83 for shorter variants)
- Smooth, low-profile vanes with streamlined shapes exhibit lower pressure drag

Quad X vanes likely exhibit efficient drag profiles due to their low height (0.4") and smooth parabolic contour.

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4. Discussion

- Iron Will's CFD findings align with real-world data from Quad X tests: increasing helical offset **does not** significantly increase total drag when using small-profile vanes.
- The performance improvements in rotation and stability from a 5° offset come with no meaningful loss in velocity.
- High RPS does not appear to introduce excess drag, countering widespread assumptions in traditional archery circles.

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5. Conclusion This comparative analysis affirms that increasing helical offset on small vanes such as the Quad X provides meaningful improvements in rotation and stability without significant drag penalties. For compound archers using fixed-blade broadheads or shooting in windy environments, a 3° to 5° offset configuration is recommended. The Iron Will theoretical framework supports these conclusions and confirms the aerodynamic efficiency of streamlined vane shapes.

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6. References

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