

allowing just enough time each way so that no deer could cross without being seen.

Look to the west, count to three, swing my head to the east...wow!

At the shot, I could see the point of impact (lungs) through the scope and heard the familiar slap of a solid hit. The buck hunched and swapped ends, its head back in the direction he had come from, seeking safety of the thick cover, but I knew he was too late. As he climbed the ridge I had watched him descend earlier, he stopped and his head began to rise as his hind end sagged to the ground, obviously about to go down. Old habits die hard, and I was already putting a second round through the great buck as he faltered and fell (I always keep shooting till game is down).

I tried to compose myself as I gathered my gear and approached the downed monster, knowing I had a Booner on the ground. Firsthand, the buck proved even more impressive than I had thought, as many hidden and smaller points could now be admired and counted. His great mass and multi-pointed brow-tines blew me away, and I simply stared in awe as I handled the rack. I immediately tagged him and got my cell phone out, calling all the other guides who were out scouting to come share in my success. Ken Hallgren was first to arrive and his ever present grin got ever bigger, his eyes widening upon first looking at the fallen monarch. The next half hour seemed surreal as the rest of the guys showed up to see the buck firsthand. We videoed and took many photos to help record the memorable moment. As the guy usually on the back side of the camera during trophy photo shoots, I thoroughly enjoyed my little moment in the sunshine before high winds and bad weather shut us down for the day.

What a great way to kick off a fall season of guiding with a big deer of my own under my belt. The next few months were a flurry of activity with a full camp of whitetail and mixed bag hunters, followed by three months of lion hunters. We enjoyed great success, despite less than ideal conditions (warm weather and lack of snow), mostly due to the diligent work of the guides and perseverance by our many dedicated hunters. Thanks to you all!

My deer was set aside, though not forgotten, and it wasn't until the finish of our hectic 90-day lion season that I was able to relax, sit back, and savor my own success from the 2004 season. It was during one of these antler-fondling sessions that I mentioned to guide Ryan Zorn that my deer held a striking



From left to right: Layne Magnuson, Sarah Magnuson and Levi Badry. Sarah is holding the shed that Byron found while his dogs were tracking a mountain lion. Byron Stewart photo.

resemblance to the shed antler that Larry and I had found on the lion hunt two years prior. After a short walk over to the lodge, the horns were put together for the first time and they were an obvious match.

Each time I gaze in admiration and awe at the wonderful life-size recreation (by Brian Dobson of Artistic Taxidermy, Edmonton, Alberta) of my mounted deer, the memories draw me full circle and I can almost hear the haunting sounds of my hounds as they pursue the lion, their voices at full cry. I then go back to my shed horn pile to wonder and dream over each antler, hoping and planning to come face to face with one of them next. 🐾

