

The

32ND AWARDS SPOTLIGHT

Huff Buck

THE INSIDE STORY OF THE SECOND BIGGEST TYPICAL WHITETAIL IN THE RECORDS*

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Before the Huff Buck's score is official, Boone and Crockett Club procedures require that an Awards Program Judges Panel verify the final score of a potential top 10 All-time record. Awards Program Judges Panels are assembled once every three years, with the next Judges Panel in April 2025. At an Awards Program Judges Panel, two teams of two judges each measure the entry, and if the scores of both teams verify the original measurement, the panel will declare the score official.

The Huff Buck will be on display for the 32nd Big Game Awards in Springfield, Missouri, at Johnny Morris' Wonders Of Wildlife National Museum & Aquarium.

SAVE THE DATE!

WE LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING YOU IN SPRINGFIELD, MISSOURI

JULY 24-26, 2025

While Dustin Huff sat in his treestand in November 2021, all he hoped to do was kill a deer big enough to beat his record of 134 inches. He's been hunting the same 185-acre Indiana hog farm since he killed his first squirrel there when he was 10. He's in his late 20s now and grew up just about a mile down the road. While hunting the farm with his 7-year-old nephew earlier in the 2021 season, Huff killed a doe, and his nephew got a five-pointer.

As a kid, Huff helped vaccinate hogs on the farm and baled hay. When he was 15, he started writing country songs. Three months after graduating high school, he moved to Nashville, where he still wrote songs while working for UPS. After three years, he said goodbye to the big brown delivery truck and started touring full-time, playing in a different state every weekend. Today, Huff is a bonafide singer/songwriter, and he travels back to Nashville from his Indiana home at least once a month for work.

When the last week of October and the first week of November roll around, he takes some time off for hunting. On November 4, 2021, the Indiana woods on the hog farm had been very quiet. As evening settled in, Huff was about to call it a day when he saw movement down in the creek bottom about 70 yards away. A big buck had his nose to the forest floor, and for a second, Huff thought it was a moose. Gaining his senses, he watched as the buck started to come his way.

It stopped at 40 yards. Huff reached for his crossbow, which three years prior he bought used for \$300. He made a perfect shot, and the mechanical broadhead did its job. Huff watched the deer stumble and go down. A few months later, in an interview with Michael Waddell, Huff was asked what "history" he had with the buck. Had Huff been watching it grow over the years on his trail cam? Huff replied that his history with the buck was all of about two minutes.

In his mind, Huff thought he'd killed a solid 170-inch deer. Once the landowner saw it, he disagreed and said it might score a high

3RD BOONE AND CROCKETT CLUB BIG GAME AWARDS

The Peak
of Pursuit

160—maybe. It took six guys to drag the buck out of the woods to the truck, and Huff snapped photos. Rightfully proud of the deer, Huff sent those photos to some friends. Around 2 a.m., things started to blow up.

BIG BUCK BLITZKRIEG

That evening, they hung the deer from a basketball goal, and a buddy put a tape to the antlers. When the totals started coming in, the numbers kept getting bigger. One Google search later, and Huff thought he might have a new Indiana state record. That night, he sent a tweet and some photos to fellow country musician Luke Combs. At 2 a.m., presumably after a show, Combs called Huff for the details. Once he hung up, Combs tipped off the writers at *The Meateater*, who broke the story the next day. The headline read, “Photos: This Buck Might Crush the Indiana State Record.” It crushed the state record, alright. In fact, it is second only to Milo Hansen’s world record. The next day, Huff’s phone and Facebook page lit up.

“After that article, people were calling—from the news, on Facebook—and people wanted me to do podcasts. That went on for about a week,” Huff said. “I just kinda took it in stride, and it was all just crazy.” He was asked to do endorsements and go to deer shows. “I’m like ‘What’s a deer show?’ I didn’t know there was a deer business.”

With all the notoriety, Huff’s prayers had



Dustin Huff with his incredible Indiana typical whitetail deer.

been answered—literally. “In music, I’ve always prayed for a big break. The big break was this deer,” he said. The deer impacted his music career through sheer notoriety and name recognition. He’d hear from folks about how they were turned on to his music after hearing about what is now known as the Huff Buck. He plans to tour with his guitar and the deer, but those antlers next to him will be replicas.

THE HUFF BUCK MOVES ON

At the beginning of the big buck media storm, some people contacted Huff about buying the antlers, and he initially turned them down. “But then I got to thinking,” he said. His dad needed money for stem cell therapy, which isn’t cheap. So, Huff put a number out there just to see what would happen.

One person who contacted Huff was antler collector Keith Snider, who will be the first person to admit that he might have an obsession with antlers. “My wife would call it an illness,” he said. Snider has been collecting whitetail antlers since he was eight years old. “Folks collect salt shakers, cookie

jars; I’ve never been into that stuff.” Today, his basement in Ohio is wall-to-wall whitetail racks. Snider was drawn to this buck for its size, but the story also attracted him.

“He [Huff] is out there just hunting,” explained Snider. “He’s not worried about killing a big deer. He took me back to hunting as a kid when I would go hunting. And if someone killed a doe, everyone would say how lucky they were.” Things are different now, though, said Snider. Thanks to better management, there are more deer, bigger deer. “The best whitetails are in our future.”

Eventually, Snider and Huff struck a deal, and the antlers lived briefly in Ohio with Snider. Does Huff have seller’s remorse? That’s

a quick no. He still has the cape and some pretty good replicas. He’s always wanted some property in Indiana, and he’s been looking around with his girlfriend. And there’s a new guitar, a Gibson J-45, that he’s finally going to pull the trigger on.

At the time, Snider said that if he ever parted with the antlers, he’d want them displayed for the public to see. He has, in fact, since parted with the antlers, selling them to Bass Pro Shops. The Huff Buck now lives among over 150 other monstrous whitetail racks recorded in the Boone and Crockett records and owned by Bass Pro Shops. “Regardless of who owns it, it’s Dustin’s deer,” Snider said. “It will always be his deer.” ■



Huff demonstrates the mass on his buck’s left antler. The buck’s B&C entry score is 211-4/8 points, making the second largest whitetail in B&C’s record book*.

