

# 32<sup>ND</sup> BIG GAME AWARDS

# 32<sup>ND</sup> AWARDS SPOTLIGHT

## GENERATION NEXT

### JACK STEELE PARKER GENERATION NEXT YOUTH SPOTLIGHT

In anticipation of the 32nd Big Game Awards, we are highlighting some of the entries from the recent awards period. These two stories recount the same deer hunt, but each is told from a unique perspective. Dad is the guide, and his daughter is the hunter.

Londyn and her dad Jamie, with her buck, scoring 161-6/8 points. While this was her first buck, it was definitely not her first deer.



Nov. 17, 2019 - First deer  
11 years old Black Hills, SD



# Londyn's buck

It was Londyn's first year of being able to hunt for a buck. After finishing all her hunter safety requirements with online testing and a field day in Rapid City, South Dakota, she could finally apply for a buck tag. She drew an Edmunds County any deer rifle tag on her first try!

On the first morning of the hunt, we sat in a tower stand to scout the area and see where the deer were moving. There was a chance a buck would come within range because we have taken several deer from that stand over the years. To the south, deer often use a large shelter belt for cover. It had rained the night before and drizzled in the morning, so we were happy to stay dry in the blind.

At first light, about 7:15, we saw deer to the east in a cornfield. Young bucks were chasing does. We also saw deer to the north in the corn stalks. We watched these deer for nearly an hour hoping a buck would head our way.

Sometime after 8 a.m., we saw some deer running from the west coming our way—two bucks and a doe. It looked like they would come right to us so I had Londyn get her rifle ready. Instead, they stopped

in the middle of the soybean field across the road from our field. We could tell that one deer was much bigger than the others, but they were nearly 1,000 yards away. We weren't sure how big the buck was. I could tell he had quite the headgear, and I told Londyn that it looked like a buck we wanted to go after.

Then another buck came from the north and joined the group. Clearly, the doe was in heat, and now three bucks were fighting for her attention. Every time one of the smaller bucks got close, the big buck would chase them off. They kept this competition up for nearly 40 minutes. During all this, the doe bedded down in a slough among some tall weeds, clearly tired from being hounded by the bucks.

Eventually, one of the smaller bucks gave up and headed west.

Not long after that, the other smaller buck was chased off and headed back to the north, where he came from. With his competition defeated, the big buck bedded down near the doe on the edge of the slough where he could survey the horizon and protect his prize.

After watching them bed down for the morning, I told Londyn we needed to make a move and go after that deer. I knew there was no way he was going to leave that doe. He was definitely in the lockdown phase of the rut.

We drove to an old farm southwest of the deer to get the wind in our favor. Then, we walked down the fence line to the north until we reached the slough where we thought they were bedded. At this point, we were still around 600 yards away.



We entered the soybean field near another slough and followed that low spot, cutting the distance to a couple hundred yards. The ground was muddy and soft from the rain, making for a quiet stalk through the bean stubble. We kept getting closer and glassing the spot to make sure we didn't spook the deer.

Once we got to 150 yards, we sat down to catch our breath and glass for a while because we still couldn't see the buck. After several minutes of glassing, we finally saw the gleam of an antler as the buck moved his head.

The wind was in our favor, and the doe was bedded on the other side of the taller weeds. She couldn't see in our direction. We knew we would be fine if we didn't spook the doe.

We snuck to 100 yards and then to 75. Still, all we could see were the buck's antlers. Even that was difficult because he blended in so well with the weeds and grass. He bedded in a low spot, which gave him the advantage because we didn't have a shot even with being so close. We tried to get him to stand with some grunt calls and doe bleats, but he wasn't interested.

At one point, he fell asleep and put his head down so we couldn't see him. We took that opportunity to sneak even closer. Eventually, we were within 50 yards! Londyn was ready with her rifle on the tripod this whole time in case he stood up.

We used the buck grunt and doe bleat to get him to stand up, but he didn't seem phased. There were times he looked right at us, and we

were surprised he wouldn't stand up to check out what we were. He felt he was hiding so well that we couldn't see him, or he just didn't care because he had his doe!

Finally, for some reason, the buck decided to stand up. He shook his tired body and then shook his head. With sleepy eyes, he turned and looked right at us. By then, Londyn had settled the crosshairs on his vitals and took the shot. He ran into the middle of the slough, started to wobble, and tipped over. Only then did the doe stand up and run off.

When we approached him, we couldn't believe how big he was! There were high-fives, hugs, and lots of smiles! We started the stalk around 9:45 a.m., and she shot him right around noon.

*Jamie*  
Londyn's dad



Nov. 2020 - Second deer  
12 years old

## Through my eyes

My day started early, and as I got ready that morning, I was excited for the new hunting adventure. I had this gut feeling that I would get my first buck on the first day I went out to hunt for one. Along with the chance to get my first buck, I was also hunting in a place I had never hunted before. I didn't even know what the land looked like. Since it had been dark when we first got there, I was even more excited to scout out my surroundings.

My dad led the way to the stand. It took a minute to become light enough outside to see any movement. It was cold, and it had been raining lightly that morning. I will be honest, I got a bit bored because nothing big enough had come our way for quite a while. Soon, off in the distance, we finally noticed not just one buck but three. The sight of this had me excited again. After watching these bucks fight for quite some time we decided to get out of the stand and head their way. This is where the hunt really began.

It was no short or easy walk to where we needed to be to make a shot. We just kept creeping closer and closer. I was amazed that

we were even able to get so close. The buck didn't give the smallest care about us and the fact that we were headed his direction.

The more time passed, the more frustrated I got because I wanted to shoot this deer, and it was taking so long it felt like I was never going to get the chance. Everything we tried to get his attention wasn't working, and as I kept looking in his direction, I started to think he wasn't even there. Every time I looked into my scope, it would get foggy, and I lost hope that I would get to shoot this buck.

When it comes to patience and hunting, I am usually very good at it because I like to make sure that I will make the best shot I can. I also

usually have to try to calm my heart down from racing from excitement, but we had been waiting so long that it was completely calm. The waiting continued, and I knew he couldn't stay in the same spot forever. That thought kept me going.

The best sight for me from that day was when the buck finally stood up. I was so prepared for that moment and knew I had to act quickly. I remember right before taking the shot, I thought he was going to notice us and run away as soon as he looked our way. Although, I knew that my gun was already positioned in the right spot, so I looked in my scope, kept aim where it was supposed to be, slowly breathed out, and pulled the trigger.

I didn't even feel the kick of my gun or hear the sound of it. I only remember seeing the buck stumble to the ground. I am always happy after every hunt, but this one was different. All the anticipation I had built up made me so grateful that I was able to execute a shot on this buck that we had been after for what felt like an eternity.

As we made our way to my trophy, I fully grasped how big he really was. This hunt is one I know I won't forget, and it has made me want to continue hunting that much more. ■

Londyn  
Groneberg

Oct. 2022  
14 years old



Nov. 2024 - doe 16 years old  
Newell, SD

