

# BEYOND MADE IN U.S.A. 7 8 P.R. APP'D. 9 252 TC THE SCORE

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There are very few places in the Lower 48 where a hunter can expect in any given year to draw a moose tag, especially for the Shiras' moose of the West. While six different western states offer tags for Shiras' moose (Montana, Wyoming, Idaho, Washington, Colorado, and Utah), they are a highly coveted tag with far more people hoping to draw than moose are available. Idaho is about your best odds for a tag with how their draw system works. However, it's a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for a bull; once you kill one, you can never put in for a first-choice moose hunt again, and if you don't take a bull when you draw a tag, there is a waiting period before you can try again.

One of the states that little is heard about in terms of moose is Washington. The state has some very nice bulls; in fact, more than 70 will grace the pages of the Boone and Crockett records book at the end of the 29<sup>th</sup> Awards. The state first started seeing moose in the 1950s in the northeastern corner of the state in the Selkirk Mountains which span into British Columbia and over into Idaho. A survey in the 1970s estimated a population of 60 moose. 1977 brought Washington's first moose season and also the

first entry into the records books—a fine bull from Pend Oreille County stretching the tape to 160-6/8 points.

Over the years, the moose population has expanded to a point now where the estimated population of the largest deer of North America is over 1,000 in the Evergreen State. Moose sightings continue to grow, and as of 2006, the state had over 100 permits available in 10 units. The top bulls come from a four counties, but the lion's share from either Stevens or Pend Oreille, which account for 59 of the currently accepted entries. It was Pend Oreille County that Bryan C. Bailey decided to hunt after being informed he had won the state's 2013 raffle tag for Shiras' moose.

As soon as Bryan learned of his luck, he began preparations—though living on the western side of Washington with all the state's moose in the northeastern corner, much of his work had to be done on the phone. After numerous conversations with people familiar with the techniques of moose hunting and judging, Bryan decided that his goal was 155 or better Boone and Crockett points for this opportunity. Unfortunately, previous engagements prevented him from scouting as he would have preferred. Though

after seeing a trail camera photo of a very fine bull, his hopes were high as he picked up his hunting partner Craig and headed over for a week of archery hunting for this particular bull.

When they arrived, the two hunted hard but were not able to find the big bull Bryan had his mind set on. While numerous respectable bulls were spotted, as is common with these premier tags, their reputation of ease is far higher than the actual opportunity. While it's true the hardest part of hunting a moose may be obtaining the tag, it's not the only thing that must be overcome to find success, especially for a world-class trophy. After this first week, Bryan returned home slightly discouraged but with a newfound respect for the moose and the hunt.

As the weeks continued on, the tag and hunt were never far from his mind. Continued calls to his contacts about rutting activity and harvest updates kept him longing to be back. Because his time available to be away was limited, he decided to wait until November once the rut tapered off and the bulls began regrouping together. It is here we will pick up Bryan's tale of his quest for a book-caliber bull.

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This column is dedicated to the system that supports the public hunting of public wildlife for all fair chase sportsmen, and the stories and trophies that are the result. Theodore Roosevelt strongly believed that self-reliance and pursuing the strenuous activities of hunting and wilderness exploration was the best way to keep man connected to nature. We score trophies, but every hunt is to some extent a way of measuring ourselves.

### Bryan Bailey's Shiras' Moose

One call from a friend changed my plans. He was telling me that a friend of a friend had seen a good bull in an area several times and thought it was one I needed to go look at. Later that night I told my wife of the phone conversation. She looked at me and just said, "Go, go and see if you can find that bull." That's all the encouragement I needed.

I started my moose quest with the desire to harvest a bull with my bow but after the first trip's result, I figured I better bring some sort of backup along. With this in mind I called my cousin to see if I could borrow his muzzleloader. He quickly replied yes and then he offered to come along and help since he was off the rest of the week.

We met up at my place the next evening and then made the drive over to moose country. The following morning we were glassing the area where I'd been told the bull had been spotted a week earlier. Throughout the day, Justin and I glassed clearings, still-hunted timber patches, and did some calling. We turned up three cows, one calf, and two small bulls but nothing even close to consider shooting. The next morning I had Justin drop me off in the same area and told him to take the truck and cover some additional area to see if we could turn up a shooter-caliber bull. We made plans to meet up about noon on a ridge we had hiked to the day before. We had seen some fresh moose sign while hiking in the area and it was a great place from which to glass several different clearings. We decided that would

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I worked my way to the top of the ridge, glassing along the way as I continued in the direction to meet with Justin. It was after 1 P.M., and I still hadn't seen him, so I sat down and started glassing some clearings to the west. Almost immediately I spotted him a half mile away frantically waving his arms trying to get my attention. There was no question he had found something I needed to see and he didn't want to leave the spot.

I grabbed my gear and took off, covering the distance as quickly as I could. When I made it to Justin he quickly explained there were several moose just inside the timber and one bull was big. We struck out in the direction he indicated. Within several minutes, we had located some of the moose Justin was talking about. I could see two different bulls. One was a small bull and the other looked good, but I only had a side view of his antlers. Both bulls were feeding so we quietly changed positions to get a better look at the larger one. Finally he stepped into an opening and turned to face me. I looked back at Justin and said, "I'm going to kill that bull!"

The timber patch we were in had been

bow down and grab Justin's muzzleloader. After some tense moments of working in closer, I was able to slip one of the 50-caliber slugs through his shoulder. He took two steps, stumbled, tipped over, and rolled out of sight.

We decided to give him 10-15 minutes before going to look for him, though it wasn't necessary. We found him right where he had gone out of sight after the shot. I knew he was "the bull" when I had pulled the trigger, and it was confirmed as I approached him. He seemed to have everything I had been told to look for: good points, wide palms, good length, and a spread of 48 inches. I was fairly certain he would score well, but even I was surprised when he scored 182-5/8 B&C gross and 176-2/8 net. This will make my bull the new Washington muzzleloader state record and tied for the third-largest bull taken by any method of harvest in Washington.

There are many people who helped me with my moose hunt, and I owe them all a huge thank you. Without their help, I wouldn't have killed such a great bull. I also have to thank my wife of more than 20 years—she understands my passion for the outdoors and always supports my endeavors. ■

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