

HOW BAD CAN LUCK GET?

Unlike so many other deer seasons, this past one began on a sour note. I had always drawn a gun permit in my home state of Kansas, and being addicted to deer chasin' like an alcoholic is to whiskey, I was down-in-the dumps when I failed to draw. Of all the bad luck! But, Kansas does offer over-the-counter permits, so I could hunt with a bow, or stay home!!!! That's an easy choice, huh?

So come summer's end, I'm scouting areas, looking for sign, driving back roads and glassing. The sun was just starting to set, when I stopped along a creek drainage. Glassing the timber's edge and the adjacent grain fields, twenty minutes or so, nothing showed. Looking across an eighty-acre soybean field, on the far end, something just didn't look right. Focusing, I barely made out a bedded buck. What didn't look right, his light colored rack contrasted sharply to the dark green of the soybean leaves.

Knowing this area well could be the edge I needed. Hunting turkey and deer for a number of years on this drainage, I roughly knew the where-abouts of trails and deer patterns. Knowing this, the only disturbance would be going into the woods to set the stand.

Two weeks later, about midday, slinging the stand over my shoulder, taking my time, I walked slowly and quietly through the oak hardwoods. Easing along, looking for any sign that would clue me into the right place. Going two hundred yards or so, I found what I needed, two trails intersecting, one going directly into the grain field, the other winding north. All I had to do now was find a tree, no problem, yeah right!!

Looking at the assortment of trees, the right position was dog-gone important. Finding the spot I wanted, the only tree there was a fifteen foot tall sorry looking elm, that might have been six inches around! Not a bit pleased, I continued searching and still couldn't find a tree in the position that suited me. Anyway, against my better judgment, I went ahead and hung my stand in that sorry elm tree!

Hunting deer a number of years with a rifle, my bow experience, you could say, was limited. Being only the

second go-around hunting with a bow, the confidence factor wasn't quite up-to-snuff. After months of practicing with the compound my shooting was greatly improved. With a few days left before season, I was ready to go... I hoped!

Not going into a lot of detail and boring you to death, here's a quick run-down of the first couple of weeks of hunting season. It was the third day out, I harvested a fine doe, that weighed right around 150 pounds, pretty good for a doe. I saw deer while on my stand every time I'd gone out, probably at least 20 does, give or take. I also counted five different bucks. Being average or a little under, the best one might of scored in the 130 class.

THEN CAME OCTOBER SIXTEENTH

Five o'clock Sunday morning, while going to my stand, I began thinking that climbing those wet tree steps was going to be something else. Standing at the tree I took one step at a time and held on tight, getting to the top, well, it was quite a feat. So far, the only thing to be happy about was the southeast wind that shook the dickens out of the tree. Soaked to the bone, and a couple hours of listening to owls, the gray sky sure was a welcome sight.

After twenty minutes of gazing at the forest floor, out of the corner of my eye, a deer was moving down the north trail, coming toward me. The footsteps were behind me now. Slowly, like ice melting, I turned my head. Surprise, it was the very same buck I had seen before the season opened, bedded in the soybean patch.

He took a few more steps before his head was hidden behind a tree. This is my chance, quickly I raised the bow, almost coming half-draw. He then stepped out from behind the tree, I froze. Holding the bow steady was getting tougher by the minute. Changing direction, he now stood right under my stand. It was now or never, pulling the string to full-draw, I sent the arrow on it's course. Running, he crashed through the brush, jumped a fence breaking the top wire, a good indication he was hit. Going straight west, I could see he was slowing down considerably, in less than

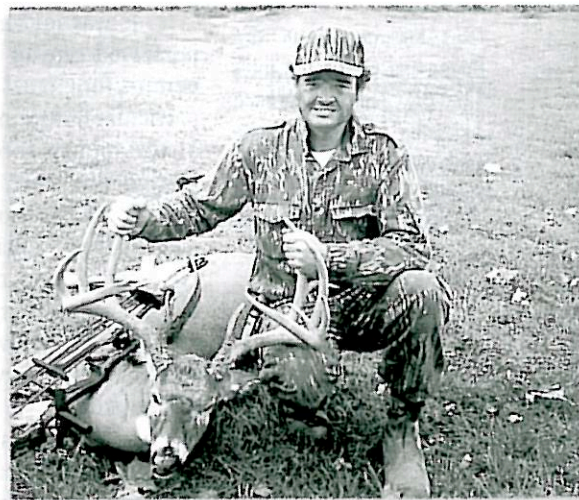
a hundred yards his rack went out of sight into the maize.

The adrenaline was running through me! Fifteen minutes went by, the heck with it, I thought, that was long enough. Climbing to the ground, I went over to where the buck was standing when I shot. Sifting through the leaves and sticks, I was trying to concentrate on finding that arrow shaft, which wasn't easy to do as excited as I was. Finally, after looking around some more I spotted the yellow fletching of the arrow. Examining the shaft, the bright translucent blood told me it was a vital hit.

Rick and Lloyd, close neighbors, got the wake-up call. As I told them the events of the morning, well, they seemed a little skeptical, to say the least. Stopping at the west end of the field, forming a line we walked toward my stand. As we made our way up to my stand, we found nothing! Talk about eating crow! Getting ready to go through again, Rick motioned us over. The blood was all over the milo stalk. We were on the right track. We easily followed it as it led toward the center of the field. Yes! We found him lying in between one of the rows of maize. Holding the rack, well, happy would be an understatement, but also a tinge of sadness, that really only a hunter can truly understand.

Summing it up, on Lloyd's cattle scales the buck dressed out at 245 pounds. With a 22-2/8 inch inside spread, over 5 inch bases and the longest tine measuring 13-3/8 inches. The rack's final score was 170-3/8. I would like to give special thanks to Mr. Larry Thomas for my green score, and to Mr. Tom Mosher who officially scored it, and also to my Lord who made this all possible.

By DAVE ONELIO
B&C ASSOCIATE



B&C ASSOCIATE, DAVE ONELIO, WITH HIS WHITETAIL BUCK TAKEN DURING THE 1994 BOW SEASON IN KANSAS. THE BUCK SCORED 170-3/8 POINTS, QUALIFYING IT FOR THE ALL-TIME RECORDS BOOK.