

# BEYOND THE SCORE

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## Luis H. Izquierdo and Bruce A. Young – Two for the Book

The sharp crack from a fire log's sap-pocket snapped me back to reality. I had dozed off, it was now past midnight, and my hunting partner Bruce and our guide Tom had not returned to camp. Sitting by the warm campfire, I ran through many scenarios as to what could have happened to them in the wild Alberta bush—and most were not pleasant thoughts.

As a kid growing up in Vermont, I once encountered a bull moose on a golf course. The sheer size and presence of that animal has captivated me since that day, and I swore I would one day hunt them. It took some time for that to happen, but I eventually ventured to Newfoundland, one of the most beautiful places I have traveled, and shot my first bull in 2006. I was now officially hooked on moose hunting!

Shortly after the Newfoundland hunt, I spoke with my hunting partner Bruce Young, a very accomplished hunter and outdoorsman, and we decided that our next moose hunt should take place in western Canada. After many conversations with biologists, outfitters, and references, Bruce and I independently settled on the same outfitter, Wild Kakwa Outfitters, operating out of Grande Prairie, Alberta. We really liked what Rick and Rita Houweling had to say, the fact that the entire family is involved in the business, the area they hunted, and lastly, we trusted the opinion of the many references we spoke to. We were booked!

Our first hunt with the Houweling team was every bit the adventure we had hoped for. The staff was great, as was the camp and the meals. The country we were hunting was spectacular, as off to the west we could see the foothills of the Canadian Rockies and from the very first morning we were into moose—big bulls at that. Our hunt did not last long with Bruce connecting on a majestic 52-inch bull on the second day and with me shooting a respectable 48-inch bull the evening of the fourth day. By the very next morning we were both booked for a return hunt in 2010.

Upon arrival in camp for our second hunt with Wild Kakwa Outfitters, we met our new guide Tom Sallows. It didn't take long for Bruce and I to realize that Tom was the very essence of a mountain man; thus, the name of his hunting video business, Mountain Man Adventures. From the moment we met Tom he started telling us about an area of the bush he wanted to take us, but only if we were prepared to, as he said, "rough it a little."

Tom's idea of roughing it a little proved to be more than either of us had anticipated, and after day one, we were ready to stage a mutiny. We had booked an eight-day hunt, and one day into it we were already beat. With some comforting words from Rick and Rita, we decided to stick with Tom. However, in his tenacious way, he had something on his mind which he would not let up on.

Shortly after our meal that night, Tom came to our cabin and instead of apologizing for having run us through a 12-hour obstacle course; he explained that if we wanted bulls like the ones we'd taken on our previous hunt, he would guide us to an area easier to hunt. However, that's not what he wanted for us. Instead, he insisted that if we had planned so eagerly for this hunt, traveled all

the way from Miami, Florida, and Atlanta, Georgia, and wanted a chance at a real trophy bull moose, then we should tough it out and stick to the area he knew. To Tom's credit, it would have been easier for him to cave-in to our request to hunt easier terrain, and we would have likely taken very respectable bulls, much like on our first hunt.

When Tom left our cabin, Bruce and I were convinced that no matter how hard this area was to hunt, we had to go back and hunt where our guide wanted.

After making the long drive the next afternoon, Tom told us he would be taking us to a clear-cut about a mile from the dirt road. As we followed a game trail through the dark woods and small openings, Bruce and I marveled at the amount of tracks—huge, fresh tracks below our feet—and the constant musk scent. The more ground we covered, the more I started to get one of those feelings you experience when you know something is about to happen. It put my senses on high alert.

We had been walking for about 45 minutes when we spotted an opening ahead of us and Tom started to cow-call. As we slowly eased our way out of the timber and gradually into the clear-cut, Tom continued calling and raking small trees with an empty plastic jug. Our objective was to walk across the clear-cut to the other side where we would sit and call for a while. Half way across the clearing, Tom stopped for a much needed rest.

We had no sooner put our packs on the ground than I happened to look over my right shoulder and all I could see at a distance of 165 yards were antlers. I whispered to Tom that there was a bull at the edge of some brush and though we could barely see the animal, Tom saw enough of the bull to tell me to shoot him. I was not convinced this was the trophy Tom had predicted we'd see so I kept asking him if he was large enough and all I could get from him was a very calm yet firm mandate to shoot the bull.

Since we were standing about 10 yards apart, Tom had a different angle of view on the bull than I did. From my vantage point, what I could see was the bull's head flared back and thus, only his front paddles, while Tom was looking at his entire head and rack. I asked Tom a third time if he thought it was big enough. When he said it was the largest bull he had ever seen, I finally allowed my .338 Winchester Magnum to roar to life.

I found the bull after tracking him a short distance. When Tom ran to where he lay and saw the antlers, all he could say was that I had shot a bull big enough to qualify for Boone and Crockett—of that, he was sure. As we caped and cut the animal, Bruce and I could not believe the size of my bull and marveled at its magnificent set of antlers.

My memorable hunt was done and now it was my partner's turn. As I sat by the fire worried about Bruce and Tom, it occurred to me that Tom had mentioned he wanted to return to the area where I had shot my bull the previous evening, but to a different clear-cut which was considerably further back in the bush. While I felt some comfort in the fact that Tom had been hunting this area since his childhood and that they were both experienced woodsmen,

This column is dedicated to those trophies that catch our eye as they come across the records desk at Boone and Crockett Club's headquarters. Some score high, some are downright entertaining, and many are just unique.

I still could not erase the worry from my mind as late as it was.

Bruce had worked hard at getting my bull out of the woods, so I was committed to staying up no matter how late, in case he, too, needed help. I had just added a couple of logs to the dying fire when I noticed a set of headlights coming through the trees. Surely it had to be them.

No sooner did Tom's truck pull into camp than I saw them drive-up to the elevated winch hoist used for skinning and cutting the animals. As I ran to the hoist I felt a sense of euphoria that not only had they returned safely, but there was another bull on Tom's truck, and it was likely another trophy.

In my eagerness to see Bruce's bull, I did not even stop to greet the guys but instead went to the back of the truck and was shocked by what I saw. There lay a bull which looked even larger, with more defined points than mine. All I could think of was that mine had been green-scored that evening by Rick at a gross of 205-plus and a final green score of more than 195 B&C points, which Rick was familiar with, and this bull looked every bit as big.

Bruce's hunt had been every bit as exciting as mine. After a long day of walking and calling with no results, they came upon a clear-cut with about an hour of daylight left. At first they didn't see anything since there were piles of tree limbs preventing full visibility of the clearing. But as they circled it while staying in the dark timber, they spotted a huge bull with three cows at 200 yards. One well-placed shot from Bruce's .338 Winchester Magnum and our second trophy bull was on the ground.

As I reflect on this amazing hunt, many things come to mind, but the most important lesson to both of us has been to always heed your guide's advice. Tom knew what he was doing and on that first day had "tested" us to see what he could get out of us. Based on what he saw, he set the bar really



Luis Izquierdo, pictured with his Canada moose, was hunting during the 2010 season in Grande Prairie, Alberta with his hunting partner Bruce, when he took his trophy bull, scoring 190-7/8 points. **TOP RIGHT** Bruce Young followed his friend taking his bull, scoring 187-6/8 points, shortly after Luis.

high, and we're grateful for that. The result of Bruce and me listening to our guide Tom's advice was that we were both able to take two incredible animals.

Both our bulls have now been accepted by Boone and Crockett Club; Bruce's scored 187-6/8 and mine 190-7/8. We can't wait to go back! ■

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