

# Generation Next: Essays

Submitted by: James D. Kristofzski

Age: 14

Trophy Type: non-typical whitetail

Location: St. Joseph County, Indiana

My Monster Buck

YOUTH ESSAY

The day I got my wonderful buck started like just another day of the 2009 deer season. I awoke at 4:30 a.m., got the gear and guns in the truck and headed out with my dad, James Kristofzski, Sr., to our hunting spot. Little did we know what was lurking around our woods.

After my dad and I dropped off our hunting buddy, Doug Greenwood, we headed to our tree stand at the back of our hunting property. We reached our



**TOP:** James' buck cleaned and ready for scoring.

**LEFT:** James, pictured here with his 'Monster' buck, scoring 185-3/8 points. He was shooting his 20-gauge while hunting with his dad on his grandfather's property when he took this buck.

tree stand around 6:30 a.m. and got ready. I could feel it was going to be a good day. Little did I know that it was going to be a great day! A few hours went by, and all we saw were a few does and a couple small bucks. Then my dad pointed out a little fawn, about the size of a Labrador, walking straight toward the tree stand. We watched it do something we didn't expect; it laid down below us—right by the same tree that our stand was strapped on!

As my dad was still watching the fawn, I looked up, and I couldn't believe my eyes. In the thick brush, I saw a magnificent white rack floating above the thicket. All I could do was tap my dad on the shoulder and point to the floating rack. I was completely speechless. We didn't want to spook the buck, so my dad leaned over, and I took aim, using my dad's back as a table to steady my 20-gauge shotgun. I waited for an open shot, but the buck had other plans. He stopped; then he took off at a fast trot. I knew this was a once-in-a-lifetime chance to tag him, so I put my iron sights right on the middle of his neck and squeezed the trigger.

When the smoke cleared, the buck was down, but he wasn't dead—he was struggling to get up! So I got down out of the tree stand as fast as I could to put him down with a second, fatal shot. After I made sure he wasn't getting back up, I signaled my dad to get out of the tree stand, and come check out my trophy. I tallied the points while my dad was on his way over, and I counted 19, and so did my dad and our buddy, Doug. Yes! A 19-point buck!

While I was about to field dress my new trophy, Doug noticed another hunter walking toward us. He said he heard the shots and claimed to have

shot the same buck. But my dad, Doug, and I had examined the buck, and there was no way the hunter could have shot the same buck; there was only two bullet holes in the buck caused by my 20 gauge shotgun. The other hunter was using a .50 caliber muzzleloader.

When I finished field dressing the amazing buck, Doug went to get my dad's truck so we didn't have to drag the 200-pound buck. While my dad and I waited, he called to find someone to score the animal, which we suspected could be a record. An appointment with John Bogucki a few days later confirmed I had a trophy buck! It scored 185 3/8,

which meant I made the Indiana records book for youth hunters and the Boone and Crockett records book for a non-typical whitetail.

Even though the 2009 deer season was only my second year of hunting, I managed to harvest a record 19-point buck, along with three other does with my Mossberg 20-gauge shotgun. That week of the season, everyone in St. Joseph County got to see my great accomplishment because a photo of my buck was published in the newspaper. I still dream of harvesting another big trophy, and I always look forward to the next deer season. ■

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