

DARK WINDOWS AND BOLOGNA SANDWICHES

BEYOND THE SCORE

Timothy J. Beck
AWARD-WINNING TROPHY OWNER
29TH BIG GAME AWARDS PROGRAM

“You shot my deer!” I heard a voice exclaim as I sat in my tree stand watching the steam rising from the nostrils of my freshly downed buck. I looked to my left and saw a large, moose of a man in camouflage. He crossed from “his” cornfield behind me into “mine” and was heading toward the magnificent buck I had shot only a few minutes earlier.

I had heard the stories of hunters squabbling in the field over disputed kills, though I had never been witness to such an incident. As with all things in life, there is a first time for everything. For a brief instant, I contemplated the probable outcome of my engaging in a physical altercation with a man twice my size.

Fortunately, my story has a happy ending. And perhaps semi-fortunate for you, gentle reader, is that you get to hear it. So gather ‘round, children!

November 17, 2012, was the first day of gun season in Indiana. The land I hunt is somewhat centrally located in an area of farmland and

small woods.

Because of this, I consider my spot somewhat inferior since other hunters on adjacent properties theoretically have first crack at deer moving through. From my stand I can sometimes see two, three, even up to twelve hunters at any given time, not counting me. On this day I believe there were at least eight of us in the area.

For almost 20 years, my plan of attack has been to take two weeks’ vacation from work to hunt deer. Indiana’s gun season is generally 16 days in November—two full weeks encompassing three week-ends. I try to hunt all day from morning until dark, maximizing my time in the stand. My thinking is: “You can’t shoot if you ain’t there!” And, if another hunter leaving at mid-day or entering before dusk

kicks a deer my way, so much the better!

There are downsides to my plan of attack, however. It takes incredible mental stamina to look at the same damned soy-bean stubble or corn stalks 10 hours a day for 16 days straight and not go mad from the monotony. Happily, the occasional crow, cardinal, squirrel, barn cat, lost dog, low-flying airplane, or whatever shows up to provide welcome diversions.

Hunger must also be considered. Before I began deer hunting, I could take or leave a bologna sandwich—usually leave. Alas, during deer season, bologna sandwiches are now my staple. I

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.

TROPHY INFO

B&C SCORE: 303 ⁷/₈

HUNTER: Timothy J. Beck

LENGTHS OF MAIN BEAMS

(R) 30 (L) 29 ¹/₈

POINTS

(R) 16 (L) 19

INSIDE SPREAD

23 ⁴/₈

LOCATION

Huntington Co., Indiana – 2012

INDIANA STATE RECORD!



Opening day, I, in turn, had to watch the dark windows of his empty home for the first time. In previous seasons, the lights in the windows telegraphed what was happening at the house. Eating breakfast. Went to the garage. In the laundry room. Watching television. Now, all the windows told me the same thing: He is not here. A sense of melancholy seeped into my usual opening day enthusiasm.

always have a few in my pack to help ward off hunger on my day-long vigils. Unhappily, no filet mignons magically appear in my pack to provide respite, so by about day eight I am sick and tired of bologna. Consequently, I have found that I can't eat cold cuts at all during the rest of the year. It's a tradeoff I have been willing to make.

On this day, as I had done for years, I arrived at the property in the early morning and parked my Chevrolet Silverado four-wheel-drive pickup. My AWD quad ATV was safely loaded in the truck bed ready to be used if needed to haul out a buck. I always walk to the stand, so I slung my much-beloved Remington 12-gauge autoloader over my shoulder, careful not to bump my sweet Leupold scope. The Winchester slugs nestled peacefully in my pockets, ready for action. I checked the time on my watch and adjusted my ear warmers around my

orange hunting hat. Then I began my walk to my stand.

My walk was a little over a half mile through an already picked and tilled cornfield. Mercifully, the farmer who farms the landowner's ground leaves a path for me from the road to the woods untilled. It has to be at least a small aggravation for him to leave a truck-width half-mile strip in the middle of the field. I have always appreciated it.

There is no way to tell my story without anonymously mentioning the man who had owned the land on which I was hunting. His relationship to me can probably best be described as pseudo-stepdad. He passed away August 2012. In his time, he was a sportsman who took many trophy game animals and fish from all over the world. He and I were able to go fishing several times, once with a charter captain who at the time had a television show.

This 2012 deer season

was the first he was not there to watch me from his window as I sat in my tree stand. In a season several years earlier, he watched me shoot a nice 12-pointer. From his window he gave play-by-play announcements to my mother over the phone. "The buck is coming. It is coming. It looks like an elk! He is going to shoot. He shot. He shot! The buck is running to the woods!" The old man eventually drove my truck back and watched me gut the incredibly large-bodied buck. "His heart looks like a frigging beef heart!" he exclaimed. I think he was happier than I was. Over the years when I field-dressed deer, I harvested the tongues for him, which he considered a delicacy. Sadly, there was no tongue bag in my pack for the 2012 season.

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I had not eaten breakfast. By 9 A.M. I had consumed two sandwiches to quiet my stomach. Seasoned hunters know that a whitetail deer can hear a rumbling belly from a quarter mile away. I cursed myself for not bringing a half dozen of the succulent, delectable treats. I checked my pockets for granola bars. I found one. Expiration date—2007. I held it in reserve.

This day I was in a ladder tree stand with a padded shooting rail covered with camo blind material. I had hung a few deer scents in the branches around me, including the scent drag I had used on my walk in. My hunting pack (sans sandwiches) was on

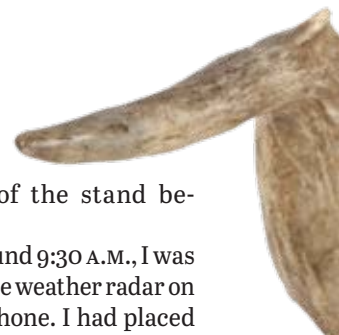
the floor of the stand behind me.

Around 9:30 A.M., I was checking the weather radar on my smartphone. I had placed my gun on the floor in front of me with the barrel resting in the right-hand corner of the shooting rail, pointing up.

To my left I saw a doe cross into the field I was hunting. An antlered buck was walking right behind her with love in his eye. They had been traveling from behind me. The doe walked out in front of me, turned, and angled back heading toward my stand with the buck bringing up the rear. I waited until the doe turned her head to look back at the buck and then picked up my gun. I put the gun on the shooting rail and shouldered it. The buck seemed oblivious to anything except the doe and continued to follow her toward me with his head down, his wide rack obscuring much of his body as I viewed it through my scope.

The doe stopped and appeared nervous. I think she spotted me. The buck continued to her, quartering toward me. At about 50 yards out from me the buck stopped and raised his head. I put the cross hairs on the right-hand side of his chest and fired. I hit him. The buck stomped around and did not run. The doe did not run. The buck stood still for a few seconds and then began walking to my right giving me a broadside opportunity. I fired a second time; he pivoted and went down. It appeared that his antlers held his head off of the ground. The doe traveled away to my right, exiting my field. I heard a shot. I learned later a hunter on the neighboring property took her.

The buck was still. I prepared to watch him for a time just in case. On previous hunts I had taken photos of my



ONE OF FIVE WHITETAIL DEER THAT SCORES OVER 300 POINTS!

B&C Vice President of Big Game Records, Eldon L. "Buck" Buckner, verifies the measurements on Beck's non-typical whitetail deer. The rack has 35 scorable points making it an extremely complicated deer to score. B&C Official Measurers use different colors of tape to mark the typical and non-typical points during the scoring process. All the points marked with red tape are abnormal points.

NON-TYPICAL WHITETAIL AND COUES' DEER

(CHECK ONE): Whitetail Coues' Mule Deer

MINIMUM SCORES
 AWARDS ALL-TIME
 180 135
 150 130

DETAILS OF MEASUREMENTS

SEE OTHER SIDE FOR SCORING INSTRUCTIONS

A. No. Points on Right Antler	16	No. Points on Left Antler	14
B. Tip to Tip Spread	23 5/8	C. Greatest Spread	27 3/4
D. Inside Spread of Main Beams	23 1/8	SPREAD CREDIT (May Equal But Not Exceed Longer MAIN BEAM)	23 1/8
F. Length of Main Beam	30 7/8	Column 1	Column 2
G-1. Length of First Point	13 3/8	Right Antler	Left Antler
G-2. Length of Second Point	16 1/8	14 1/8	1 1/8
G-3. Length of Third Point	13 1/8	15 1/8	1 1/8
G-4. Length of Fourth Point	7 1/8	10 3/8	1 1/8
G-5. Length of Fifth Point	2 1/8	7 1/8	1 1/8
G-6. Length of Sixth Point, if Present	—	4 1/8	2 1/8
G-7. Length of Seventh Point, if Present	—	—	0 1/8
H-1. Circumference at Smallest Place Between Burr and First Point	6 3/8	6 1/8	0 1/8
H-2. Circumference at Smallest Place Between First and Second Points	5 1/8	5 5/8	7/8
H-3. Circumference at Smallest Place Between Second and Third Points	6 3/8	7 5/8	1 1/8
H-4. Circumference at Smallest Place Between Third and Fourth Points	—	7 1/8	1/8

TOTALS
 ADD TOGETHER: Spread Credit 23 1/8, Column 1 104 3/8, Column 2 107 7/8, Subtotal 236 3/8
 SUBTRACT: Column 3 10 3/8, Subtotal 226 1/8
 Add Line E. Total 77 7/8
FINAL SCORE 303 3/8

Exact Locality Where Killed: *Rock Creek Trap*
 Hunter (Legal Name): *Timothy J. Beck*
 Trophy Owner (Legal Name): *Timothy J. Beck*
 County: *Huntington*
 Date Killed: *11-17-12*
 Guide's Name: *N/A*

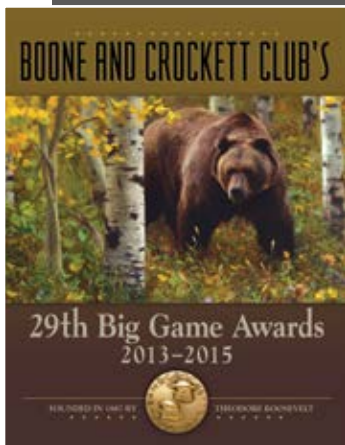
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WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN B&C'S ALL-TIME BOOK AND THE AWARDS BOOK?

The All-time book, *Records of North American Big Game*, is published every six years and includes all trophy listings that meet the All-time minimum scores. The Awards books—such as our newest records book, *Boone and Crockett Club's 29th Big Game Awards 2013-2015*—are published every three years and have listings of trophies accepted during a three-year Awards period. The Awards books are considered supplements to the prior editions of the All-time books. Another major difference between the two books is the inclusion of hunting stories about the award-winning trophies recognized during that Awards Period, like Timothy Beck's account of his non-typical whitetail deer.



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- Includes all B&C trophy entries accepted between 2013–2015
- Over 500 B&W photographs and 60 color photographs
- 7 x 9 inches, 736 pages

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deer from my stand when practical. That was my plan for this buck as well—waiting and photographing. As it turned out, I never took any photos from the stand.

“You shot my deer!” I heard from the mooseman who was following the same path as the buck had taken. Mooseman crossed into my field and turned to speak with me. For a split second, I did not recognize him. Fortune smiled on me when I realized he was a fellow hunter from the property adjacent to me. I had met him a few times over the years during deer season and we had exchanged information such as “Which way did they go?” (West.); “Did you see anyone messing with my deer stands?” (I had.); “Do you have any extra bologna sandwiches?” (He did not.)

The mooseman asked for permission to go look at my buck, which I granted. He marched to the buck and I descended and joined him. “Ay Chihuahua!” I thought, when I saw the antlers up close. We counted 36 points. Boone and Crockett later counted 35. Even later, a Buckmasters scorer counted 38. (If anyone knows of a Safari Club International scorer who can count 40, please let me know.)

As it turned out, the buck and doe had passed right in front of my mooseman acquaintance on their way toward me. Indiana has a one-buck rule. He had already taken a buck during bow season and did not try for the doe because he wanted to watch the giant-racked deer. He had witnessed my harvest and congratulated me on a clean, quick kill.

An interesting fact we discovered about my buck was that he had an older wound from an arrow in his right rear hip. The buck was not limping and appeared to be walking normally as he trailed the doe.

We ogled the antlers

and chatted a bit. He took some photos and then returned to his property to continue hunting. The official Boone and Crockett photo was one he took with my phone.

My usual practice upon getting a deer is to send a text message with photo to my good friend, Bubba Joe, who usually texts something back like “good job” or whatever. I dutifully selected a photo and sent a message about a thirty-something-point buck to Bubba Joe. Almost immediately my phone rang and Bubba Joe exclaimed, “I am coming to see!” I then explained where I was and requested that he unload my ATV and drive it to me to save me a walk.

I gathered my gear and field dressed the buck. I tagged him with my homemade deer tag. I have an Indiana Lifetime Comprehensive Hunting and Fishing License (no longer offered), which I had purchased in 1996. It covers all possible Indiana hunting and fishing licenses such as deer firearm, archery, muzzleloader, antlerless deer, trout, gamebird, etc. From a cost standpoint, I broke even long ago. A minor inconvenience is that I have no official temporary tags and have to craft my own. Over the years, I have used scraps of paper, wrappers, keychain tags (work great!) and notecards, to name a few items. Lately, the Indiana DNR website has offered a printable temporary tag. I now use that and hand-write “Lifetime” for license type.

Eventually Bubba Joe arrived on my ATV, and I rigged the buck for transport. I had not mentioned bringing my deer cart as well (he did not bring it), but I did have a plastic deer drag sled already at my stand. The plastic sled is similar to a child's snow sled, which, no doubt, an enterprising company colored olive drab and sold for ten times the

price. I had used it successfully in the past with other deer. Unfortunately, the buck's rack proved too cumbersome for the narrow sled to handle. We unloaded the buck from the sled and tied it to the ATV with a tow rope.

Bubba Joe pointed to my truck in the distance and noted that a crowd was gathering. Sure enough, word had already spread. I marveled at modern communication technology. I noticed other trucks with hunters milling about waiting for my buck and me to make an appearance.

I climbed aboard the ATV and started again. I had to drag out the buck slowly and arrived at my truck with no further issues.

I enjoyed getting to talk to several of the hunters who had gathered to see the buck and offer me congratulations. I believe that more than once I saw the same vehicle leave and return with even more spectators. I allowed photos to be taken by anyone who asked. Some of these photos later showed up on various hunting websites much to my delight and amusement. I read comments such as: “That deer will never score 300. Nice buck, though!” The official B&C score for my buck is 303-7/8, which puts it in the top 5 All-time and makes it the new Indiana state record.

After about an hour, I decided to call an end to my one-man deer show. I thanked everyone for coming and asked them to please drive safely going home. Bubba Joe took charge in loading my buck onto my hitch rack—a rack he had fabricated and recently given to me. He was as proud of the hitch rack as I was of the buck's rack. Perhaps even more so.

As I drove away, I glanced in my rearview mirror at the house and the dark windows. I think the old man would have been proud. ■