

BEYOND THE SCORE

MADE IN U.S.A. 7 8 P.R. APP'D. 9 252 Tc

BY JUSTIN E. SPRING | ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF BIG GAME RECORDS

Barri Twardoski – Montana Special Draw Elk

Elk hunting for a Montana resident generally involves buying an over-the-counter license with most of the state being open for general season, though there are a few areas that are a fairly difficult draw. Last year Barri Twardoski was one of the fortunate hunters to have his tough-draw hunt listed as successful on the Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks draw results page.

Still riding high on his enthusiasm of drawing the tag, his first trip into the mountains was more of a scouting trip to get an idea of both the area and the number of elk. He also had a mountain goat tag in his pocket, which was filled with an awards-book billy the same year—but that's another story.

The first day he and his hunting partner Paul Cockrell spotted a group of bulls on a ridge, and spirits were high as they turned in for the evening. The next morning, Barri was into elk right away and even attempted a stalk on a great bull but could never close the distance closer than 80 yards. He did get some great photos of this bull but was pretty sure that was the last he would see of him.

The next day they filmed numerous herds of elk and bulls with their harems while scouring the hills for a bull worthy of the tag that Barri had in his pocket. In addition, they saw some bands of mountain goats and photographed them as well.

Day three started out the same as usual but in the afternoon they heard a familiar bugle. Barri and his hunting partner slowly worked towards the bugle, carefully checking any opening they could see. Soon, a bull materialized all alone in a high mountain meadow in a small opening of about two acres. He was the focal point of a picture right out of a Lambson drawing. The grass was split by a small brook running along its edge and the bull stood broadside in the afternoon light. Barri took a knee by a small tree and estimated the bull at about 40 yards. He slowly drew back and found the bull in his peep sight. It was mostly broadside with a slight angle away for the perfect shot.

The release was good and the bull bolted for the dark timber. The two hunters waited about 45 minutes and then began trailing, assuming the bull would be lying nearby. While the blood started out strong, they were surprised by the distance he had covered. This is when they were faced with a dilemma that no archery hunter every wants to face—one that tests the will and character of anyone who has ever taken to the woods with a stick and string. The blood was becoming sporadic, and soon a snowstorm covered the little sign he was putting down. Barri had a terrible, nauseated feeling and began to worry he could not recover the bull that day.

After trying to locate the bull with any sign having been covered by snow, the two regrouped and picked a line to follow back to camp. As they worked back, Barri heard something off in a ravine and peeked over to discover the bull. When they approached, they witnessed a bit of a gruesome scene, not typical of a good archery kill, which he had achieved. He assumed the bull had thrashed around before expiring, but later investigation opened the possibility that coyotes or wolves had perhaps discovered the kill prior to them. Fortunately the only thing that was damaged was the cape, and Barri was rewarded with a fine bull that any hunter would be proud of. ■

Twardoski with his Montana typical American elk scoring 366-5/8 points.



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.

Thomas Vaida – B.C. Rocky Mountain Goat

I was once told that “sheep hunting was for goat hunters when they got too old.” While I am not sure if there was ever a goat hunter who “retired” to sheep, I do know that mountain goats inhabit some of the steepest, toughest, most remote, and most rugged country found anywhere on the North American continent. Hunting for these animals is, in almost all cases, extreme, and I have talked to a few people that said after taking one goat, they are never going back.

Tom Vaida was on such a hunt in the Skeena Mountains of British Columbia in September 2010. After hoping for 40 years to take a goat, he finally booked a guided backpack hunt with Double Eagle Guides and Outfitters as a 60th birthday gift to himself.

On September 7th, Vaida loaded his 40-year-old Kelty pack and began the grueling five-hour climb 10 steps at a time to timberline. After setting up their spike camp, they crept up into the nearby basin and glassed a group of 19 goats, which all turned out to be nannies and kids.

The following morning the duo awoke to find a tremendous black bear near camp, which guide Troy Ronald estimated a height pushing eight feet. Vaida had a bear tag, but he was there for goats, not big old bears. That morning they decided to hunt up the left side of the basin working their way up rockslides and cliff faces until finally getting cliffed out. They sat down to both rest and glass and soon spotted a pair of good billys in the distance, one bedded and one feeding. As they sat resting their legs, the bedded goat arose and surveyed his realm. Satisfied with the state of things, he moved towards the other goat and joined him, feeding. There was no way to approach the goats with the amount of daylight left, so the two elected to take the long way back to camp to avoid sliding down the talus slopes.

Day three again began with a quick breakfast and coffee at 7 a.m., then a hike up the right side of the basin where they were greeted by a nanny and kid who had to be shoed off so they could continue their climb. They reached a knife-edged ridge, and Tom was far less confident on this than his

seasoned guide. He inched his way along the ridge on his tail-end with legs hanging off the cliffs on both sides. Further up, the ridge top mellowed slightly to where he again felt confident on two feet, but the steep incline was still extreme. As they continued up to reach a good vantage point, Troy was well ahead of Tom. He looked over and was soon excitedly scurrying down the hill to report a shooter billy in good position for a shot. He instructed Tom to leave his pack, take his bipod and rifle, and be as silent as he could. Other than the slight sounds of Tom passing gas and almost invoking a laugh, he obeyed, and they were soon crawling into position on the oblivious billy.

Tom positioned himself but couldn't use the bipod due to the angle. Once steady, he got the shoot order and slowly began the squeeze that he had practiced countless times at a goat picture on his wall back home. The bullet did the job and the goat dropped his head instantly. A quick congratulations and Troy was off to go grab the goat before it

started to slide. He almost made it in time. The goat slowly began to slide and continued to gain momentum until it came to rest on some scrub trees 200 yards down the hill. Fortunately when Tom got down to it, the billy was in fine shape. He surveyed his fine goat, which stretched the tape to 48-2/8 inches after the 60-day drying period. ■



Thomas Vaida with his record-book Rocky Mountain goat taken on a once-in-a-lifetime hunt in British Columbia. The billy has a score of 48-2/8 points.

Scan these Codes for

**EXCLUSIVE CONTENT
PHOTOS VIDEOS
COUPONS DEALS**



Download the Neoreader App at
get.neoreader.com

 NEOREADER

© Jordan Outdoor Enterprises LTD. 2011 1227-11