

HE SHOOTS, *HE*



Donny Lloyd of Grande Prairie, Alberta, with the velvet-covered giant he took in Alberta in 2010. It didn't grow any brow-tines at all, but no need to worry because it has everything else. The antlers carry great mass and long tines, just look at those long G-4s! The antlers gross 187 and net 181 6/8 typical points.

SCORES!

BY DARRELL ORTH

Donny and a team of determined hockey players (Fort St. John Flyers) won the Allan Cup in 2010. As you can see, you couldn't wipe the smile off Donny's face after that happened.

One of my favourite hunting partners and best friends is Donny Lloyd. He is my best buddy's 26-year-old son. I have been privileged to watch Donny grow up in our hometown of Cranbrook, British Columbia. Over the years I have watched him excel at his two passions in life: hockey and hunting. I have enjoyed watching him lead his pee-wee hockey team to victory and have seen him excel right through his WHL and AJHL careers. Through it all, it seemed that whatever the kid touched turned to gold. He was named "Best Defenceman" in the AJHL, breaking the all-time goal scoring record by a D-man. Then, after finishing his junior career, he won the Allan Cup, Canadian Senior Hockey Championship, with the Fort St. John Flyers. As I said, the kid's a winner. No surprise then, when he started archery hunting, he KILLED it! Because Donny has lived in Grande Prairie for the past several years, he has been the hunter-host for his father, Wilf, and myself for our annual Alberta deer hunts.

In the fall of 2010, we arrived in northern Alberta days before the mule deer season opened to scout and set up stands. During our daily archery practice sessions, Donny was clearly superior in his shooting ability, splitting apples like Robin Hood as Wilf and I watched in amazement. We had located a couple of great bucks and were excited for opening day.

Donny settled into his ground blind early in the afternoon with his king-size lunch, a chunk of foam to sit on, and a hockey magazine (what a surprise). Donny gave Wilf and me first choice of stand locations so we thought we had the edge in the game. We had prepared perfect ambush locations and thought we had it all figured out. Full camo, scent retarder, and all the latest gadgets were utilized. The weather was warm and the deer would be moving late.

After six hours on stand, Wilf and I met each other at dark. Track soup and sore butts. Not even a doe! Not even a sniff of anything alive! A bit of a buzz kill to say the least. We waited for Donny to return, knowing we would probably have to console the young man and try to keep him positive upon his return. After all, he had last choice of stand locations. "Gee, he's late," we thought. Maybe he had fallen asleep.



Soon he came strolling back to the truck. "You guys have any luck?" he asked.

"Not a thing. You?" I replied.

"Yeah, I got one," was the nonchalant answer. Of course, we thought this was just another one of those sick lies that hunters seem to enjoy ticking each other off with. As he put his gear away, we realized he was one arrow short and really telling the truth! Surprised? I shouldn't have been. Like I said before, everything the kid touches turns to gold.

Donny then recounted how, as the light had started to fade in the evening, he heard crunching directly behind his stand. He quickly put down the magazine, slowly grabbed his bow, and came to full draw while lying on his back, a feat in itself. He knew the deer, at least he thought it was a deer, was close and he was therefore afraid to move.

While at full draw, Donny peered through the small opening in the trees behind his stand and saw a tall four-point mule deer rack approaching at less than 20 yards. He instantly knew this buck was gonna get "the treatment" if he could only get to his knees and find a lane. As Donny rolled to his knees, the big buck stopped and stared directly at him. Instinctively, like he had the puck on his stick in the dying seconds of the final game, "Wonder Boy" centred the pin on the buck's chest and let 'er rip all in one smooth motion. The buck, facing straight on, took the arrow square in the chest at 18 yards. He whirled and went deep into the dark timber.



Here is the happy group of hunters. Left to right: Darrell Orth, Donny Lloyd, and Wilf Lloyd. Darrell and Wilf live in Cranbrook, British Columbia. I met these hard-core hunters a few years back at Wilf's taxidermy shop.



Long-time subscriber Wyndell Wroten of Rayville, Louisiana, took his 12-year-old son Noah to Alberta a couple of years ago. Noah got this 145-inch 13-point whitetail with Jim Fisher of Rocky Mountain House.

Silence. The woods again returned to the lonely quiet that had been present just 10 seconds before. With darkness fast approaching, Donny knew his shot was solid and opted to vacate the spot and begin his search in the morning.

We were on the scene at first light. I must admit, the blood trail was not like following the yellow brick road as it is on the *Hunting Channel*, but after a couple of hours we were able to find enough sign to determine his direction. Two hundred yards later, we came upon one of the biggest typical mule deer bucks I've ever seen. All of our eyes were as big as saucers as we stood and admired this beautiful trophy. We were more than happy and excited for our newly crowned team captain. This was simply an awesome buck, and Donny's best mule deer to date. I love it when good things happen to good people, and this was the case for sure on that August evening. We loaded the deer onto Donny's pack, and I carried his bow while Wilf took the binoculars.

At the time we felt this could very well be the best buck that Donny may ever have the good fortune to tag, but knowing Donny like I know Donny, I would expect him to shoot and score again in the near future. 🍀