


WHEN *Wishes* COME TRUE

— BY AUSTIN GUERRA —

Austin Guerra found giant sheds from a buck they called "King of the Field" in the spring of 2009. The massive antlers scored 187 3/8 inches. (See photo on page 26, fall 2009 issue.) In 2010, Austin and his dad, Billy, were on the deer trails once again. Austin was following a well-used deer trail while his dad was checking out another part of a big field. He had only walked 300 yards when he found an enormous shed that would later score 102 inches. When the two of them met up later and Billy saw the antler his son was carrying, he nearly did a backflip! After some pictures and a quick snack, they decided to pick their way through the snowdrifts with the quad to try to find the mate. They were half a mile from where the first shed was found when they spotted tines sticking skyward. The race was on! Austin scooped it up before his dad could reach it. They were both very excited and couldn't wait to measure up the antlers. They ended up finding eight complete sets in that magic spot. When measured, both sheds carried main beams that went 25 inches. All the circumferences were six inches and over. The right shed scored 102 3/8 and the left went 102. Giving the rack an 18 4/8 inside spread, the sheds ended up scoring 222 7/8 non-typical points. All photos by Billy Kuryliv, Lac La Biche, Alberta.





Austin Guerra of Lac La Biche, Alberta, is indeed happy after taking this great buck in that province in 2010. His dad, Billy Kurylitw, also pictured, helped the young hunter harvest his first deer. Austin really loves the outdoors and has already picked up bigger sheds than most veteran antler hunters will ever find. Austin's buck has very good mass and scores 165 inches.

November is finally here. I have been waiting for this time to arrive since May, when I got my hunter's training certificate. I am so eager to begin hunting, but patience becomes the name of the game. November 1, my dad is at work, I have to wait. November 2, I can't sleep. November 3, my dad is on his way home. We go into town, purchase our tags, have a quick bite, it's dark. November 4, 3:00 a.m., I'm up, I make enough noise to wake up Mom and Dad, five hours till daylight, still waiting.

Finally, all dressed in our camo, we load the truck with our gear and drive to the field where I found a number of sheds this spring, including the ones from the "King of the Field." I sneak into my ground blind with Dad, while Mom waits in the truck at the gate a long ways back.

There are does everywhere as the morning sun rises; in total, 16 surround us as they are leaving the field. My patience is wearing thin, my heart is racing, and the main thought



Austin Guerra with the magnificent whitetail sheds he found in the spring of 2011.

running through my head is *The big boy is coming!* However, only small bucks cross our path. We sit till 10:00, then decide to walk out and do some rattling in the bush.

After spending the day rattling and grunting, I ask Dad if we can go back to the field and try the ground blind for an evening hunt. Mom has sandwiches and snacks, good thing too, I am starving.

During the evening hunt, it seems to take forever for the deer to come out. Finally, the wildlife begins to emerge: in total, 17 whitetails, one mulie doe, a cow and calf moose, and one coyote. Then the worst part of the day comes: darkness.

With time running out, Dad and I do a bunch of scouting on the second day of my hunt because he has to go back to work on Wednesday, which is only five days away, and I question why we are spending so much time looking at sign. After coming across some big scrapes and rubs, we leave immediately after finding them and set up for an evening hunt in another place to let this hot spot lose our scent. My evening hunt consists of sit, wait, doe, doe, doe, small buck, smaller buck, spike, does and more does. As darkness falls, we slip out and go back to the truck and head home.

Mom has an awesome supper on the table when we get home, and I tell her all about my day. I have to admit I'm tired, but I can't go to bed until we come up with a game plan for our morning hunt; we will hunt the scrape line we found. Mom says she will come with us in the morning and wait in the truck because she has a good feeling about what is to come.

The third day, everything is already in the truck, except the guns. As we load up and head out of the driveway, Mom and I

discuss different topics to keep my mind sound. We're running a little late this morning because Dad has to mix his coffee.

After we slip into our blind on this crisp November morning, four does approach us from behind, then a little buck. In the distance, a cow and calf moose are departing the field. Three big does move past us, following the edge of the field where the scrape line runs, and not far behind them is a buck, grunting and moving fast. He is on a mission, and I can see his every breath. As I hold the .25-06 on him, I ask Dad to stop him for me. Dad grunts, the buck stops, I fire. Looking like he's trying out for a rodeo, the deer bucks really high and Dad says, "You got him!" But I have another round ready and my eyes are glued to the animal. When he stops moving, I squeeze again just to make sure, and he drops.

While walking up to him, I am so excited I send Mom a text to come as fast as she can, no more waiting. Mom is faster than Dad was this morning! After all the hugs and high-fives, I take some pictures. After I tag my first whitetail, a big whitetail at that, we load him up and we're on our way. I tell Dad we have to stop and show my great uncle; after all, it is his field we were hunting in. After a handshake and congrats, we go home and Dad shows me how to cape out the buck.

Then it's time for the tape to come out. G-2s are 10 inches, the beams are a whopping 23 inches, and the inside spread goes 18 1/2. With six points on each side, he has a rough score of 165. My first whitetail hunt will be one I'll remember for a long time to come. Waiting does pay off in the end. Thanks Mom and Dad. 🍀