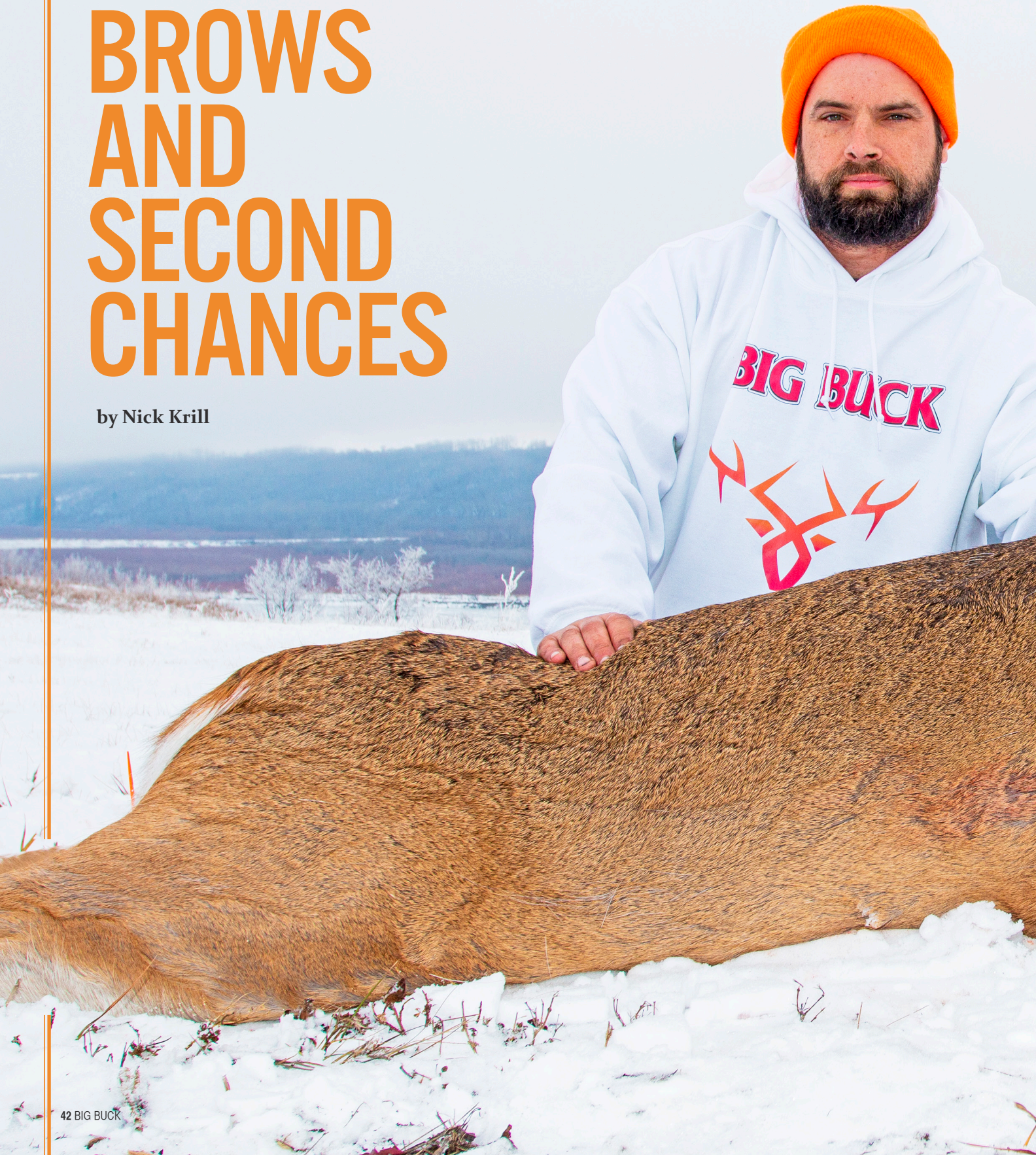
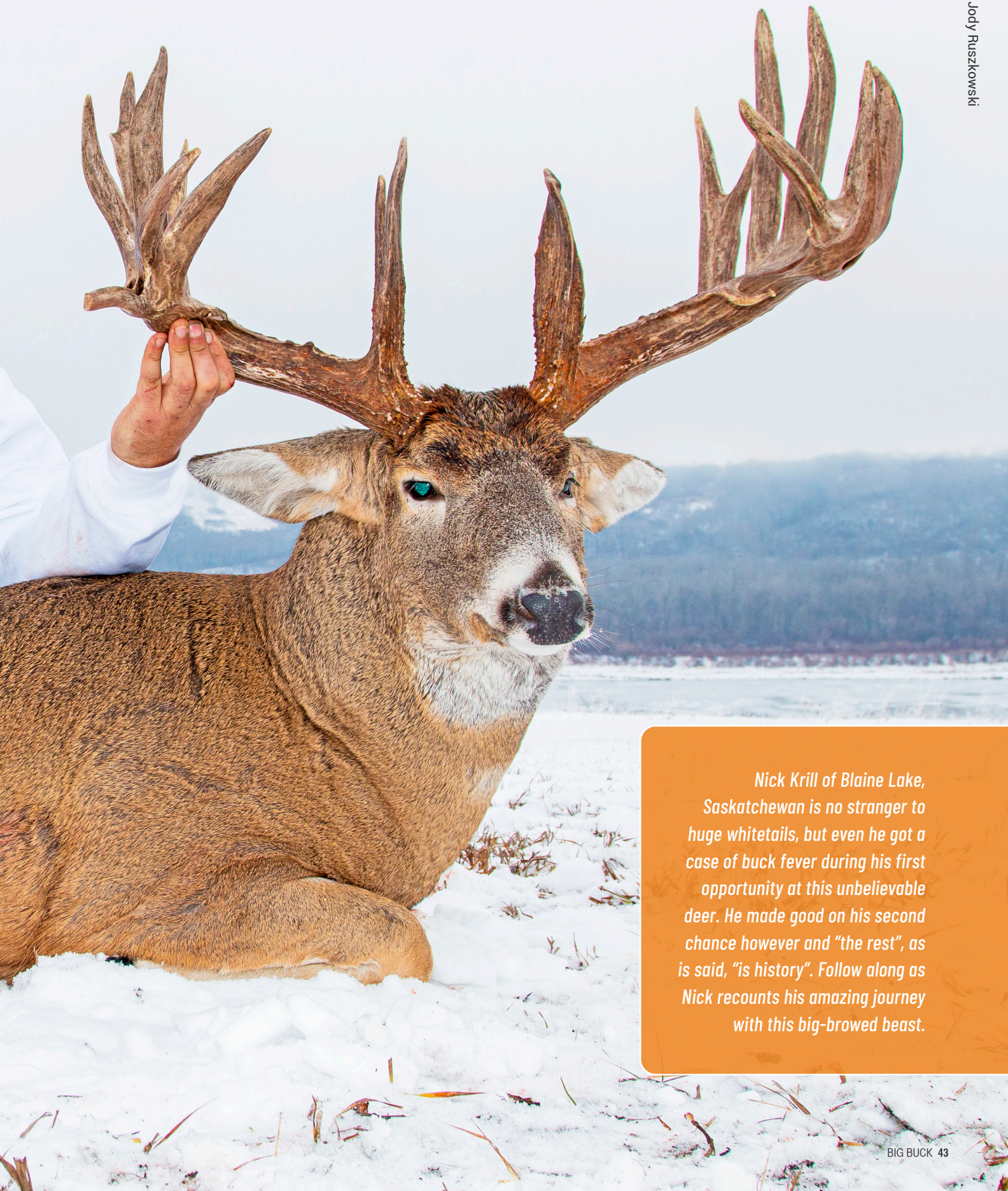


BIG BROWS AND SECOND CHANCES

by Nick Krill





Nick Krill of Blaine Lake, Saskatchewan is no stranger to huge whitetails, but even he got a case of buck fever during his first opportunity at this unbelievable deer. He made good on his second chance however and "the rest", as is said, "is history". Follow along as Nick recounts his amazing journey with this big-browed beast.

The 2019 hunting season had come and gone without me finding a whitetail buck I was interested in pursuing. However, on the bright side, a beautiful 6x5 had become a regular on one of my trail cameras, and had survived the season. Little did I know this buck would consume months of my life in years to come.

The next year, now 2020, began with the usual mineral top-ups throughout the summer and early season, but my cameras at the sites did not reveal anything special showing up. I suspected the 6x5 had either not made the winter, or had moved back to wherever he came from. It wasn't until late November when my good friend, Tim Stupnikoff sent me an image of a gorgeous big-framed buck with a long in-line tine that showed up on his trail camera. We quickly figured out it was the 6x5 from the previous year. As suddenly as the big whitetail showed himself, he was just as quickly gone. The season came to an end with no sightings and no more trail cam pics. With a large amount of snow accumulating, I decided to put a feed station out in a different area throughout the winter to help the deer survive. My mission was to find the 6x5 again. It didn't take long before a few bucks showed up at the winter feed. Low and behold, one night the big 6x5 made an appearance! He was clearly a 180-190 class buck.

2021 started the same as the other two, with mineral top-ups and summer cams out. Fall was approaching with no sign of the 6x5. It wasn't until the start of October, while out on an evening drive, that I spotted a bunch of deer in a field. There! Sky-lined on a hill was a giant whitetail with what looked to be tines everywhere and crazy mass. I instantly knew it was the 6x5. I watched him feed until light was gone, then I excitedly headed home. I phoned and chatted with my father, Bob.





This view shows just what kind of mass the buck carries. With an overall gross score a hair shy of 225 inches, it has a typical frame grossing 199 7/8 inches! The inside spread of over 21 inches adds to an already impressive set of antlers. The buck would have hit over 230 gross if it had not broken a drop tine off between Nick's first chance and the second.

I told him I found the deer and it was a giant. That night I was consumed with how I was going to hunt the buck with my muzzleloader, as the season was open.

The next night I went out early and sat, watching the field from a distance. I did not see the big guy but I did see where all the deer were coming from and what time. They were emerging from a small tract of bush and into the open field to feed. There was a slough in the field for cover, and I was tempted to try a move, but it was past legal shooting by the time the deer were in muzzleloader range of it. I was pretty sure they were bedding not far away in the tract of bush. The next afternoon I had off, I went in and made a natural blind on the fenceline near where the deer crossed, and another in the slough. I also found a strategic spot to hang a trail camera. Between the two blinds, I could hunt on most winds except west.

As luck would have it, west winds were blowing the

next couple of days so I stayed out and just observed from a distance. The second night, just a few minutes before the end of legal light, out comes a giant big-brow beast! There he was! He was on the back end of the field, feeding towards the slough. But by the end of shooting time, he was still 300 yds from the slough. It was looking like my only option would be the fenceline.

The next day forecasted southeast winds and I was in the blind by three in the afternoon. Two hours later, deer were coming by as close as seven yards from me. It was tense. Then, with 15 minutes of legal light left, I looked to the east. Standing on a small ridge 150 yds out was a blocky, big-browed whitetail looking absolutely gigantic.

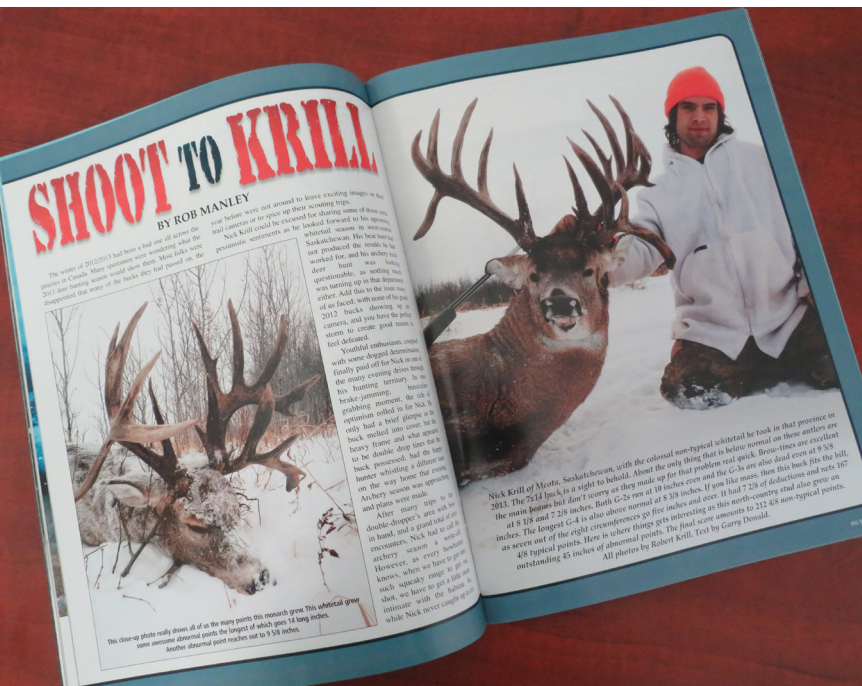
My heart was racing. It was the feeling and the moment every hunter dreams of! He followed a smaller buck to 126 yards then turned broadside. I put the second reticle in my scope on him and pulled the trigger. Smoke enveloped me, and deer were running everywhere in the confusion. I waited five minutes before I just had to walk up to the spot the buck had been standing. I couldn't find any blood, or hair. Nothing! I looked up ahead a couple hundred yards, catching a glimpse of the giant; flag up, and running in to another bush. My heart sank with failure. It had been

Nick certainly could not have got this giant whitetail on that fateful day without the help and generosity of his good friend, Tim Stupnikoff. Tim is a seasoned outdoorsman and knows how rare a buck of this magnitude truly is.

straight up buck fever. In my excitement I had put the 150 yard reticle on the top of the buck's back, shooting right over him. Shaking still and heart-broken to my core, I shuffled back to the truck in defeat.

The next day after work, I headed out to see if there was anything coming out to the field. I was surprised to see some does and few small bucks. Then a mile away from where I took my shot, I spotted the monster big brow buck coming out of a different tract of woods to stand sky-lined on a hill once again. I got the video camera out, taking some footage, feeling terrible about how I could have missed, but relieved to see he wasn't wounded. The buck didn't seem to be too shook up. Thank goodness for an animal's short memory.





2014 image: Nick was featured in our 2014 Spring Edition with a 219 inch buck he got in the 2013 season. He certainly eclipsed that personal best this past season!

Wouldn't you know, two days after muzzleloader closed, I walked the buck on one of my sites. And at nine in the morning! Finally, I had some good pictures to see exactly what he was! I could see a main frame 6x6 with extra inline tines and two drop tines! An absolute beast, for sure, a 230 class deer any way you looked at him. What a whitetail! The camera showed he came back in that evening, and also for the next three nights. Then, "poof", he vanished.

On November 12th I managed to fill my draw moose tag. Tim came along to help me get the bull out of the bush. By that time, neither of us had pictures of the huge buck for over a week, however, we soon found out that while we were sitting in the truck, driving back to Tim's to skin my moose, the big buck was visiting one of our sites. Finally, he was back! That good fortune did not last long as the buck would only end up being there for a couple minutes, before disappearing for an extended period again.

On the night of November 14th, the evening before opening day, Tim and I made a plan, deciding where we would be going in the morning, splitting up to cover more country. It didn't seem to be any use to sit in a blind since the buck might as well be named "Casper", after all his disappearing acts! I was out, scanning deer country when shortly after legal shooting light, I got a call from Tim saying he had seen the buck running in to a ravine, but was unable get a shot. I immediately ripped over to Tim's location.

We excitedly decided to each walk an edge of the ravine, hoping the buck would run out one side or we would see him down in the bottom. I got to the end of the ravine just as a doe bolted out across a small opening before entering a huge patch of trees. Then I caught sight of another deer's body, standing broadside and looking back up in Tim's direction. I put my gun to my shoulder and through the scope I could see those big brow tines that haunted my dreams. There was all kinds of brush between my position and where the buck stood, but the hunting gods smiled down on me as I was able to see enough of an opening to get the crosshairs behind the buck's front shoulder. At the squeeze of the trigger the buck bolted. I chambered another round, putting the crosshairs just in front of his front shoulders, squeezing again. With this shot the buck skidded into the edge of the bush. He was down...It was over!

I got out my phone and calmed down enough to call Tim to tell him the deer was dead. We met back at the trucks then headed around and down to the buck. I've never felt so many emotions as I did, walking up to this whitetail. To get a chance at a deer of this caliber is one thing, but to get two chances is absolutely unreal. I owe a huge thank you to Tim Stupnikoff for calling me that morning to team up to get this incredible animal. And thanks to Big Buck's Jody Ruszkowski who came out on a moment's notice to take pictures that will last a lifetime. And finally, thank you to my dad who made the drive to share my excitement and to cape the buck out. This will be an outdoor experience that will stay with me forever. 🍷