

BROKEN CURSE

BY JASON VILLEMAIRE



Jason Villemaire of Medicine Hat, Alberta, with the unique whitetail he took in Saskatchewan in 2006. The antlers carry lots of mass and big abnormal points growing from the base on the deer's right antler. The buck has a 180-inch frame. Jason's cousin Tyler Villemaire, pictured on the right, was also on this memorable hunt.

Over the past three hunting seasons, I have seen my family members harvest some great whitetail bucks. My dad, Mike, took a nice whitetail in 2003 that scored 176 typical. In 2004, my cousin Tyler got a nice non-typical that went 176. The following year, my uncle Gary and brother Jon both shot two great bucks, scoring 160 and 165 typical respectively. So you can only imagine the heckling and teasing I got from these four great hunting partners. Oh,

trust me, I had my chances at nice deer, but I could never connect. They all thought I had a curse set on me by the “whitetail gods.” I was beginning to think so myself.

The 2006 hunting season started out like all the others finished: “rocky” and “disappointing.” I was hunting mule deer and missed a nice buck that would probably go in the high 180s. However, the harder I hunted, the better the season seemed to get for me. On November 9, Tyler was

hunting with me, and after a hard day of walking coulees and only seeing some small mulie bucks, we decided to go check some other spots. In one field we came upon, Tyler spotted a nice whitetail buck that we figured would go in the 140s if it was a 5x5. So the stalk was on, and to make a long story short, I had a 5x4 on the ground that scored 130.

The next day, I was back out looking for a big mulie buck. I had walked all morning, but didn't see anything worth shooting. I made it back to my truck at about noon, tired and pouting because I only had two days left to hunt mulies before I would head up to northern Saskatchewan to hunt whitetails. While I was sitting there, I looked out into the field and about half a mile away I spotted five deer bedded in some buckbrush. I quickly grabbed my spotting scope and could tell that one was a buck and very heavy. I made a game plan, headed downwind, and began my stalk.

As I got near to where the deer should be, I couldn't see them anywhere. Then all hell broke loose – I was only 75 yards from them, but upwind, and they had busted me. The first three does ran 20 yards in front of me. Just as I was wondering where the other doe and buck were, I noticed antlers coming at 100 yards. I thought to myself, *He's really heavy. 125 yards, he's not overly wide and picking up speed, oh, one sticker point. 150 yards, oh, two sticker points! 200 yards. . . BOOM!* I had a 177 typical mule deer on the ground with seven-inch circumferences.

November 22 found my cousin Tyler and me making the long trip from Medicine Hat, Alberta, to our hunting spot in



This photo shows the broken G-2 and the neat brow-tine on the right antler.

northern Saskatchewan. As we unloaded our hunting gear in the cabin, we couldn't get over all the snow that had fallen overnight, it was up to our knees. With a couple of hours left before dark, we decided to go have a look around. We didn't see anything big, but we did see a lot of deer feeding in the fields, which got us excited for the days to come. All the snow made it hard walking, but we both knew that sooner or later one of us would run into a big whitey.

Day one was uneventful with only seeing small bucks ranging from 120 to 140 being the biggest. Day two, I was back in my favourite stomping grounds, where I spotted two bucks fighting along the bushline on the other side of the field. One was a definite shooter, so I tried to sneak closer, but only caught a glimpse of the bigger one heading into the bush with

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Jason with his Alberta mule deer.

then he was only 80 yards from me. He spotted my movement and put his head down, trying to make a quick turnabout, but it was too late – my crosshairs were already settled on him. I sent the 130-grain Nosler ballistic tip from my custom .270 Winchester on its way, and he went down.

Making the 80-yard dash over to him, I pulled his antlers out of the snow and admired my biggest whitetail to date. I knelt down beside him and thanked God for letting me harvest such a magnificent animal.

As I made my way back to the road to wait for Tyler, I thought for sure that he had heard the shot. When he pulled up, I kept a straight face and opened the door, waiting for him to say “Did you shoot?” but he never did. So I threw my empty case at him.

He caught it and said “What’s this?” with a puzzled look on his face.

two does. However, I did get a good look at the smaller buck, which would probably go in the 150s. I watched him for a couple of minutes, but decided to hold out. I hunted that area hard for the next two days, but didn't find anything worth shooting. With six days left to hunt, I wasn't in a hurry to shoot an average buck.

Sunday morning found us driving around, doing some scouting and visiting a longtime friend. We came upon a nice whitetail in the high 150s that was wide with average height but spindly. The area we saw him in had a lot of good sign, so we made plans for Monday morning.

Monday found us back in the area we had scouted. After Tyler dropped me off, he carried on to his hunting spot. As I reached the field's edge, I slowly made my way along the bushline. About 250 yards later, I spotted a buck out in the middle of the field, about 350 yards away. It was still pretty dark out, so I made my way through the hilly field to get a closer look. I came out right on top of him at about 70 yards and watched him for a couple of minutes again. Not quite what I was looking for, I continued hunting till about 10:00 a.m. when I saw Tyler off in the distance. He signalled he was heading back to the truck, so I did the same.

I was about 250 yards from my pick-up point, standing along the bush, reflecting back on the buck from earlier in the morning and wondering if I had made a mistake, when I looked up and noticed a buck cresting a hill with his nose to the ground. Putting my Leopold binoculars on him, I saw his mass and drop-tine immediately. I raised my rifle and put the crosshairs on him, but couldn't shoot because there were some branches in the way. I slowly walked around the trees, and by



Jason took this big typical in 2007 while hunting in Saskatchewan. It grosses 162 typical points.

I replied, “What does it look like? I got one!”

“How big?”

“Hmm, 180 with a split drop-tine and a sticker point that looks like an acorn and lots of mass!” Then Tyler got all excited and high-fives were given.

Then, with a serious look on his face, Tyler said, “You better not be @#!\$ joking!”

“Well, look out in the field about 200 yards.” All we could see were the buck's antlers sticking out of the snow. What a great day and a good feeling now that the “curse” was broken. To top it off, Tyler ended up shooting a nice 145 on the last night. 🍀