

SKULL



AN OUTFITTER'S JOURNAL

Jason's
**201"
BUCK**



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When Jason Yates made his first trip with SHHC in 2019 he came with high expectations after doing his research for his then upcoming Colorado archery mule deer tag which he was hoping to try to fill during the rut. This was evident after meeting with him the night before his hunt started as he gave various compliments to SHHC while we were sharing stories of past hunts and experiences, and it also made it clear to me that Jason was a very accomplished archery hunter. We appreciate the compliments and it reminds us why we continue to do what we do year in and year out with every client who trust us with their highly valued tags.

Just like Jason, I know what kind of mule deer the Eastern Plains of Colorado can produce, but I also know that the Eastern Plains can be an extremely tough hunt, tough enough that it has demoralized a significant number of hunters over the years. It isn't the physicality, it is the mental aspect that can drive a guy mad and cause them to seriously consider picking up the rifle for their future plains endeavors.

I knew of a big typical that year that was hanging out in a 320 acre patch of wild sunflowers that were easily 6 ft tall in many spots. It was hard getting an accurate idea of how big he was as I could only catch glimpses of him as he fed on the clover that blanketed the ground. However, I had seen enough to know that he was going to be stretching the tape close to 200 inches. This buck, which we named Ace, was the obvious front runner to try to get Jason on. The first morning we couldn't turn the buck up so we decided to head to go look for a different buck and maybe come back and hit it again that afternoon. We hadn't made it three miles when those plans went right out the window. In a wheat stubble field of all places was a freaked out giant 200" whitetail that had a hot doe cut off from the rest of the herd. When it was all said and done, we had made 4 stalks on him that day but came up empty handed. Each of those stalks was playing on repeat in both of our heads for the next 3 days. The shoulda, woulda, coulda's were killing us. However, all that got put to the side

when we found Ace on the 5th day in his fortress of sunflowers. Jason was more than impressed, however in vegetation that thick any kind of stalk is going to be hard and on that day we had absolutely zero wind and knew we were going to sound like a freight train trying to get through that stuff. The forecast for the next day showed to be a little better but still less than ideal. Considering that we knew where he was and had so far been unable to find him outside of that patch of sunflowers we decided to keep an eye on him and try a stalk the next day when conditions were a little better. The final day of the hunt found us sitting on the same hill looking at the same deer in almost the exact same conditions as the day before. After a little discussion we decided that Jason should go in by himself to try to limit the amount of noise that was going to be inevitable from all the dead sunflowers. This would also allow me to keep an eye on the deer in the event the stalk didn't work out in our favor. We were unable to close the deal on the giant typical that day, but Jason had seen enough to know he wanted a spot for the 2020.

2020 started out very slow as it was unseasonably warm and we were in a terrible drought. Most of the big bucks were nocturnal and sticking to the cover of the corn fields during the daylight hours. When Jason got to town I knew he was going to be anxious to get after it. It was the beginning of the rut so we had that going for us, however the possibility of outdoing what we did in 2019 was going to be a tall order. The first day was just as it had been, hot, dry and unproductive as far as trophy quality bucks were concerned. We were seeing smaller bucks and does which kept us entertained if nothing else, however, the second day everything would change. I decided to get on one of my favorite glassing perches that day which overlooked an uncountable number of acres of rolling sandhills littered with sagebrush as well as a couple of bordering corn fields. My hope was to find one of the bigger deer I had seen that summer before he slipped into the corn for the day. This would at least give us a starting point for that evening's hunt if nothing else, however, I didn't



congrats

think we would find him less than 200 yards below us chasing does, but that is exactly what happened. This went on for a good hour or so before they found a little blowout in the middle of the sandhills to bed down for the day. Everything was looking perfect for a stalk, except for one smaller buck was bedded down wind of the group. With our wind I felt like we would be able to sneak around him and get within range without getting busted but it was going to be a bit of a gamble. However, given the fact that we had found our second 200 inch typical in just two years, we had to try....

We were easily able to get within 100 yards, however we still couldn't see exactly where he was. We had a good wind and knew where the little buck was, but for the next 50 or so yards staying below his line of sight was going to be tough. We felt if we could go 50 more yards and our wind held that we could put some brush between us and conceal our final push to get a shot, which we were able to do. The excitement level started to rise as we thought we had just got past our biggest obstacle, however as we were sneaking closer I felt the wind slap me on the right side of my



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face. My heart immediately sank as I knew exactly what was about to happen. I didn't even look at the little buck as he started to explode from the nose full of human scent he just got blasted with. Instead, my focus was 100 percent on getting Jason a range on the big buck and praying that he would give us just a couple of seconds before he blew out of his bed. I ranged the buck at 37 yards and told Jason to draw, but the giant buck was on a dead run before he even stood up. Once they were out of range we sat down and tried to stay still hoping the deer would calm down and just go look for another bedding spot. They stared back at us for a good 15 minutes before walking off the other side of the hill. We both hopped up and ran to the next hill and were able to watch them mill around and bed back down. We knew we had to make it happen this time or he was going to go who knows how far. We came up with a plan and just like before getting within 100 yards was fairly easy, however this time we weren't able to get much closer without being seen by him and his does. It was a longer shot, but Jason assured me he was more than comfortable if we could cut another 20-30 yards. After seeing him shoot a target the past couple of years I knew he was definitely capable. It was a long shot, but we were gonna make it happen. We quickly got into position and Jason drew, got to his knees, settled his pin and let it go. I watched through my binos as the arrow hit perfectly in the 12 ring! It puts a smile on my face to this day thinking of the excitement that poured out of both of us at that moment.

On the drive back to town I realized that this was the second 200 inch typical we had chased, the second year we had hunted together, it was the second day of his 2020 hunt, and we just so happened to shoot him on the second stalk.... Maybe 2 is our lucky number?



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