

SKULL

A man in camouflage gear is smiling and holding a ram's head with large, curved horns. The background is a desert landscape with mountains and sparse vegetation. The word "SKULL" is written in large blue letters at the top, with a pair of antlers integrated into the "K".

AN OUTFITTER'S JOURNAL

JEFF'S
FIRST
RAM

special edition

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the LAST MAN

Growing up in North Dakota, I never really thought of, or heard of, hunting an Aoudad (Barbery Sheep). With Whitetail, Mule Deer, Elk, Moose, Antelope, and some great bird hunting, it's just not an animal we talked about hunting up here. That changed when I got a call from a good friend, Justin, who just got back from South Texas where he was hunting Aoudad. "I need to go back; we should try it." He said. "Aoudad??" I said. "More like Ahh What?" I hadn't heard of that type of ram until that day. The more I read about Aoudad, the more excited I got. A few calls with Neil at Sandy Hills and quickly myself and 3 friends (Justin, Jerad, and Jared) were set on going down to West Texas to hunt Aoudad.

The day before the hunt we would fly into El Paso then make the drive down to the ranch. Flights went well but there was one problem. All four of our rifles were stuck at our connection in Dallas. A quick call to Neil, he hooked us up with Trent (our guide for

the week) and all I heard was, "Don't worry, man. Just use our guns. They are good to 1,000." Problem solved.

We rolled into camp around 7 pm. Before we could unpack, we sat down for a ribeye dinner. Good start. We were then taken to our rooms overlooking a fishing pond. You could say we were impressed from the start. Lodging and staff were first class. A few drinks and some arguing over the shooting order, we were ready for some hunting. Being the nice friend I am, I decided I would shoot last.

The first morning we set out in 2 rangers, since I was last shot it was a relaxing morning. We would see a lot of Aoudad but mostly Ewes. On the way back for lunch, Trent quickly stopped his ranger. After a quick glass with his binoculars, then spotting scope, Trent stated: "That's a donkey." Trent's nice way of saying "huge ram." That got us riled up quick. He was laying down at around 700 yards, so we sat



there and planned. It would be impossible to get closer from where we were without jumping him, so we decided to circle back around the other side of the hill and try to get a better angle. We made it to the other side and jumped a different group, they went the direction of the ram we were after and quickly they were all on the hoof. After watching from the Ranger we decided to walk and get above them on another hill. After a 45-minute hike, the plan worked perfectly. We found the big ram and Jerad dropped him at 140 yards basically shooting straight down. One down!

Shortly after we saw the other group settle about 450 yards away. There were 2 shooters in that group of 30. This gave Jarad time to set up and get a comfortable shot. The biggest ram didn't want to come out from behind a cactus, so there we sat. After 20 minutes he slowly walked out at 460 yards and stood for

Jared to get off a shot. Jared was quickly in the lead for longest shot. Two down!

The next morning it was Justin's turn. We went in a slightly different direction and quickly into the drive we found a heard with around 20 rams. With 4 or 5 shooters, Trent helped pick out the ram with the nicest chaps, as they were all similar in horn size. After a few looks at different rams, Justin was finally on the one he wanted. "603." Trent said. A couple of us were a little surprised to see the ram drop; but it was a great shot. We won't talk about the ram Justin missed the night before at 275 yards. Three down!

After lunch, it was finally my turn on the trigger. After 3 great rams down, some pressure was mounting as those would be tough to beat. We went to the similar area we saw other rams, but they weren't around. A short drive later and we



FOUR *for* FOUR



saw a shooter walk out on top of a rock 1,300 yards away. After a few jokes about me wanting to win the longest shot bet, we decided to start hiking a hill towards him. After navigating a hillside trying not to get thorns in my arms and legs, we were close to the rock we first spotted him. I was right behind Trent went he whispered, "get down, he's right here." Luckily, we used that same rock for cover and got to 161 yards. After a few seconds, that seemed like minutes, he stepped out from behind a cactus and walked broadside. The 7 LRM #gunwerked. Four down!

While taking pictures with my ram we all couldn't help but notice how unique the area really was. We all had a new respect for these rams after seeing the terrain they lived in. With four rams over 30", we all agreed the hunt couldn't have gone any better. The more we learned about the ranch and its rich history, the more we were happy to witness in person. A few more nights of great food and some drinks, It really was a great time spent some great friends. The whole hunt was first class and luckily, we will be bringing great memories (and some great horns) back to North Dakota.