

SKULL



AN OUTFITTER'S JOURNAL

JUSDIN'S
VELVET
BRUISER

A SANDY HILLS HUNTING PUBLICATION

SHHC
APRIL 2022

COLORADO

VELVET

Hunting mule deer has always been my focus and what drives my hunting passion. I have hunted in multiple western states over the years but when I hunted in Colorado the first time, I knew it was a special place. I hunted in Colorado four years before finally finding Sandy Hills Hunting Company. Finding them was a complete game changer they know their area like the back of their hand, and it shows with the quality of game they turn up year after year. Not only do they produce trophy quality animals, but the guides are on a level of their own. It doesn't feel like they are just there to get paid and move on to the next client after your hunt. They treat you like an old hunting buddy and your success is what they pride themselves on. From

the start Jeremy walked me through the application process and had me apply for the unit he thought would give me the best chance at a big mule deer.

When my dad and I arrived in Colorado we were greeted by one of Sandy Hills Hunting Company guides named Tim. Tim was very accommodating and showed us the house we would be staying in while hunting with them. We immediately hit it off with Tim and we could tell right away we had found a truly one-of-a-kind outfitter. Russell, my guide, showed up a little bit later and we immediately hit it off with him as well. After talking with him and getting a plan for the morning hunt we decided that we would hike to a look out and watch a field to see

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what would feed out. He had scouted the area over the summer and seen a couple of good bucks. The morning couldn't come soon enough my dad and I where full of anticipation and ready to kick off our fall hunting season.

When morning finally came, we were ready to go and anticipation was high. We Drove to the spot where we would begin our hike to the glassing spot. After getting set up we immediately started picking up deer in our glass. The spot was loaded with deer it's the most deer I've seen in one location. Coming from Washington State I might hunt a whole season and not see as many deer that were in this one spot. We thought we were in deer paradise. There where countless does and bucks in this spot. We looked over them carefully, but it was tough to cover them all since there were so many. We finally picked up a buck that looked like he might be a shooter, so we studied him for an hour or so. Unfortunately he was just off the property that we were allowed to hunt so we were unable to move in closer to get a better look. Russell was pretty sure that he had seen the same buck when scouting earlier and had photos of him that he showed us. By this time it was getting hot and the deer had fed into the trees to lay down in the shade. We went back to the house to grab lunch and wait for the evening hunt to see if we could get a better look at him. The weather that day was very unsettled and there were storms rolling through on and off all afternoon. I was unsure how well the afternoon hunt was going to go with the passing thunder and lightning, but we had to give it a try. We returned to the same spot that we went to that morning. Once we got set up, we started glassing. We hunkered down under



hook CHEATER buck



a tree to avoid getting wet from the passing rain showers. After a storm passed we began glassing again and that's when Russell spotted a buck. Right away I could tell from the sound of his voice this buck was something truly special. He quickly explained where the buck was and I picked him up with my binoculars right away. I could tell this was the buck I came to Colorado for. He had everything that dream bucks are made of, a huge hook cheater, other cheaters going everywhere just a true Colorado giant. We looked at the buck forever in awe of his character. When I asked Russell if he had seen this buck before when scouting he responded no. I'm not sure what made this buck decide to show himself on this day but I'm sure glad he did. We studied his location trying to get a plan on how we would stalk

in on him to try and get a shot. However, this buck was very smart and it showed. He was running with another buck and had positioned himself with does surrounding him. The downwind side was a treed hillside with does and other bucks feeding out of it. We tried to find any way to get a good stock on him, but it just wasn't possible in his current location. We made one of the hardest decisions a hunter can make and walked away from him to not disturb him and blow him out of the draw. We made our way back to camp dreaming about getting another shot at the buck in the morning.

In the morning we went back to our lucky glassing spot and started looking for the monster we saw the night before. We glassed for an hour without being

able to turn him up. Russell decided that it would be a good idea to ease out of the area and go check another spot so we would minimize our presents in the area. Which looking back on it was an excellent idea because we might have spread our scent in the area and pushed the buck out. Once we got to the other spot we made our way to another glassing area and immediately turned up more deer. We saw multiple does and smaller buck at first. We later picked up a couple of really nice bucks that could have been shooter bucks if we hadn't already seen the massive buck the day before. It was getting late in the morning so we decided that it was time to pack up and head back to camp because everything was bedding down. As we drove through the area making our way back to camp, we came around a corner and saw another huge typical buck that was feeding on some brush 100 yards off the road. He was moving fast so we hopped out to get a better look at him and try and cut him off. It was too late though he had moved into the trees and we couldn't find him again. After this excitement of seeing another great buck this hunt seemed too good to be true.

On our way back to camp we talked about what our plan should be for the evening hunt. After seeing the two nice bucks that we had over the course of the hunt I just couldn't pass up going after the first buck we saw with the huge hook cheater. The plan was set we would go back to the first spot we had hunted. That evening we went back to the glassing point we had seen him on and set up to glass until we found him or when legal hunting hours were over. As we sat there, we saw many bucks and does just not the one we wanted. The light dwindled and it became evident that he was not going to show himself that evening. We packed up and headed back to camp. As we made our way back to camp, we began to second guess our decision we had made the night before when we saw him. Should we have tried to put a sneak on him and risk blowing him out of there? Once back at camp we discussed what we should do in the morning, we hadn't seen him all day, but we did see another really nice typical buck at the other area. After analyzing it from all angles we decided

to go back to where we saw the hook cheater buck and if we didn't see him first thing in the morning we would go over to the other spot we saw the big typical buck.

We left the next morning and headed out with high hopes of seeing one of the two bucks we saw over the course of the hunt. We started glassing further down the draw looking for the hook cheater buck, but we didn't see him at the first spot we stopped to glass. We made our way further up the draw and he appeared right on the edge of the field. We all looked at him and immediately knew it was the buck! The excitement level went through the roof he was with just one other buck and we could easily stalk him. We quickly closed the distance to 83 yards. I got into position and set up my shooting sticks in preparation for the shot. I knew I could make the shot because I had been practicing all summer at 100+ yards. As I looked through my sights at the buck I got steady and squeezed the trigger, Click... This I had not prepared for...my muzzleloader didn't fire. The firing pin went off, but it didn't move forward enough to strike the primer. The miss fire immediately sent me into a panic. Was the buck going to run off? Was my gun going to fire on the next primer? These thoughts all raced through my head as I reached into my pocket to find another primer and recap my gun. I got my muzzleloader recapped and luckily the buck was still standing there. I aimed at the buck's vitals and slowly squeezed the trigger boom the muzzleloader went off in a cloud of smoke. The bullet struck the buck dropping him immediately which is what every hunter stives for, a clean ethical kill. Once we knew the buck was down high fives and handshakes in celebration were abundant. As we walked up on the buck the term ground shrinkage was the opposite of what we were all thinking, the buck grew the closer we got. His character with all his extras left me in complete awe. I couldn't believe that it had all come together, and we had harvested our number one target buck. It was truly a once in a lifetime buck and I couldn't be more thankful for all the hard work Russell and the Sandy Hills Hunting Company put in to give me an opportunity to harvest such a buck.

"He had everything dream bucks are
made of..."

