

WYOGA HUNTING STORY CONTEST WINNER

# “THE LONG AWAITED TROPHY UNIT HUNT”

by Darren Miller, Prospect, Pennsylvania

Finally, after earning 7 points in the Wyoming lottery, my father (Gary Miller) and I draw unit 7. So immediately we call Cliff Graham at Hunting Consultants Unlimited and booked a 5 day Elk hunt with Dax McCarty and Wagonhound Outfitters for their tent camp in Medicine Bow National Forest. We had been researching Wagonhound for years and knew they were the Outfitters for us. Our first day to hunt was October 15th, opening day of the 2015 rifle elk hunting season.

After getting into camp early the day before our hunt started, we were able to scout the area surrounding where we would be hunting. This scouting mission greatly increased our anticipation for the next day's hunt as we seemed to see elk come out



to push on due to it being the first morning and they knew that there were bigger and better bulls to be taken. Reluctantly we agreed so we headed further down the trail.

We continued to a second location, all along seeing and hearing elk all around as well as a quality 6X6 bull with cows leaving the area just as we were getting to the spot. At this time it was about 9:30 am so we decided to post up to relax and glass. While sitting there, the guides recommended that we split up to cover twice the ground. My dad knows I cherish these hunting trips with him, allowing us to spend time with each other and being

of every piece of timber. On opening day, as we walked to the food tent for breakfast at 5:00 am the air felt cool. We knew we wouldn't need to layer too heavily making for a comfortable day hunting. After a quick breakfast my guide, Jamie Anderson, my dad and his guide, Bob Nielson, and I walked for the trailhead. With the days provisions secured in our backpacks we headed up the mountain well before first light. As we slowly hike up the trail, we could clearly hear at least four separate elk bugling close by but both Jamie and Bob felt it best to continue up the trail to a higher vantage point so we could glass the area. Once able to glass, we started to see groups of elk emerge from the timber along with the occasional satellite bull. Both my dad and I were getting excited as these were some of the best bulls we have seen throughout our hunting career. After glassing for a while the guides wanted

there when one of us has an opportunity to take an animal, but we knew we needed to capitalize upon this opportunity in this trophy





unit and split up to cover more ground. So we split up and I headed out with my guide Jamie deeper into the woods.

Jamie and I worked our way further out. All along the way we skirted the meadows staying just inside the pines and took extra precautions not to silhouette ourselves on the skyline as to not alert any elk of our whereabouts. Just before noon we came across a large clearing from which we bumped a nice 5x5 Elk resting just inside a small stand of pines. At this time Jamie felt it would be best to hunker down for the afternoon and wait for the elk to start moving on their own. Laying there I couldn't help but fall asleep listening to the elk bugle at one another in the dark timber.

After resting for a couple of hours, now about 3:30 pm, our impatience got the better of us. We decided to start still hunting in an attempt to stalk some of these elk, listening for ones with the deepest growly bugle. Twice we ventured into the dark timber but failed both times only able to get fleeting glimpses. Realizing our first plan to let the elk get up on their own was best, we fell back. After a while we noticed that the elk were moving toward us and the surrounding meadows. Identifying two distinct elk by their bugle, we started paralleling the movement of the closest. Unfortunately, once we got eyes on it we discovered that

it's left main beam was busted off halfway between G3 and G4 otherwise it would have been an animal I would have gladly taken.

Shifting our attention onto the second bull I hear a shot ring out from the direction of my dad. This put a smile on my face knowing he wasn't taking a shot unless it was a big bull elk. Knowing my dad potentially had an elk down and with the light failing, the final stalk of the evening was on so we continued towards the second bull. As we approached we could see at least 30 elk, a mix of cow, calves and rag horns. At this point we were about 450 yards out but could not identify the bull making all the noise until we see a challenger trot out of the woods making a beeline towards the group. We see him, the Herd Bull, get up and head directly at the challenger. Fortunately their battle commenced over the knoll and behind some trees providing Jamie and I the perfect opportunity to get closer as their attention was directed elsewhere. In the time it took for the Herd Bull to dispatch the challenger we were able to close the gap between us down to 125 yards. Immediately after returning to the herd, Jamie whispers, "TAKE HIM! That's a big bull". He didn't have to tell me twice so kneeling down I steadied myself on a small dead pine to wait for my opportunity. Suddenly three more shots ring out in the distance, my dad on his bull, gets

my adrenaline pumping even more. Jamie said, "about 110 yards, good shot, shoot him!" but unfortunately our site windows were different so I had to wait until he took a few steps forward. A few steps later, he was broadside and I let him have it. Jamie said, "I couldn't see him, you hit him?" just as the bull runs out in the open and stopped broadside. Thinking to myself "he's hurt, he's going down" I decided to put a second in him dropping him in his tracks. We walked up to my trophy and I discover truly how big he was. Jamie immediately says "He could win WYOGA!" Now dark and with all the excitement, pictures and quartering finally settling down, we radioed Bob and my dad to give them the good news just to find out they too had an impressive bull down.

Thanks Dax McCarty and Wagonhound Outfitters, and our guides Jamie Anderson and Bob Nielson for an amazing hunting experience for both my dad and I. And a special thanks to WYOGA for the opportunity to share my story. 🦌

**SCORE: 361-5/8 – Hunter, Darren Miller – Guide, Jamie Anderson (2015, 1st place Elk: Typical Rifle)**

**SCORE: 353-2/8 – Hunter, Gary Miller – Guide, Bob Nielson**