



The Unlucky IN THE W

STORY BY JOEY BUCHANAN

Choosing to hunt with a bow and arrow can produce a wide range of emotions both rewarding and devastating for those of us that choose this hunting approach. Sometimes these emotions can occur within minutes or seconds of each other. Taking the field for the last 25 plus years with my homemade recurve, well let's just say the deer or turkey win most of the time! But sometimes you may find an unlucky one!

Longtime bowhunter and Past Mississippi Bowhunters Association (MBA) President, Bobby Barr, lit my homemade archery candle years ago around 1976 when he instructed me on how to fletch my own arrows. A bright eyed and bushy tail lad from Indianola, I was a sponge for any and all knowledge pertaining to archery, bowhunting and especially making my own equipment. Roll the years forward a decade and some years later, I would be laying up my own recurves in my Atlanta bachelor apartment, thus providing my neighbors with smells and annoying sounds!. The late

Best Buck WOODS

80's and early 90's was a magical time for the resurgence of traditional archery. Lucky for me I was practically sitting on the "X" there in GA for rubbing elbows with the traditional sport's hunting elite, bowyers and larger traditional tournaments being held state to state and regionally frequently. Being a single man and not marrying until I was 38, my weekends were filled with traveling to shoots, rendezvous and hunting with my new fraternal traditional friends. All the while my thirst for making all my hunting equipment heightened and then spilling over to call making, especially turkey calls.

Now back to why this buck was so unlucky. I guess you would have to go back in time with me and revisit some of my unlucky moments...

"You can't kill a moose with a rock!" I whispered to myself, although I almost had too. On my first Alaska do-it-yourself float hunt for moose, half way into the hunt, I lost my bow. Most precisely, on a float approach to a fertile moose rutting spot, our raft hit a sweeper and my bow was thrown into the water never to be seen or recovered. If anyone is ever up by the Aniak River approximately 23.3 miles downstream, look for my take down recurve with a Shedua riser. If you find it, it's yours!. Lesson learned...tie your bow to something that floats.

My first Merriam hunt on the Apache reservation around 1996 in Arizona will always rank as one of my biggest mistakes. Opening morning at sunrise found me a mere 100 yards away from a gobbling Merriam just wanting to be shish-ka-bobbed by my arrow. All that stood in the



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way was for me to unshoulder my NEW Double Bull Blind, set it up for my very FIRST time and place my decoy out. Simple you'd think, but it never happened! I bounced around inside that canvas tent pushing rods, breaking rods and cussing all the while that bird continued to gobble. Soon a native hunter slipped up and smoked him off the limb. I was still swallowed by the camo tent. I never got the blind up. Lesson learned... practice putting up your new blind and preferably not the day of the hunt.

There was still more to learn. After a 30 minute bike ride into my brother-in-laws public land honey hole, we hid our bikes to race through the woods to close the gap on a gobbling bird. Set-up was simple since we had done this before at the same spot a year ago on a mature tom. Decoys were put out and our blind neatly draped between a trio of sweet gums bordering an open spot in the woods proven to be a strutting zone. With everything in place, bird gobbling and getting closer, now all I had to do is knock an arrow and remain still. I have done this 1,000 times over last 20 years...but never have I gone hunting without...my arrows!. Yes, I left them in my hip

quiver in the truck miles away. Lesson learned...never again use a detached quiver. My quiver stays on my bow. Did we kill the turkey? Naw, I couldn't stay still intentionally so my brother-in-law would not get a shot!

"Drop Shot"...No, this is not a fishing technique but an archery snafu! One particular cold morning on the Mississippi River when the wind was still and the red oaks were raining, I was positioned over a scrape that couldn't be fresher or wider. It was just one of those spots you find and you hunt. I found it that morning and returned within in an hour, my climber in tow intending to hunt all day. It was that good and I was right. Just minutes before noon after a 2 hour sit, here comes the "Rocking Chair" cross wind to the scrape. A 10-yard drop shot was offered. I drew back and released the string. It was then I heard a familiar noise. The noise of a dry fire resounded through the woods with my arrow dropping to my feet. Somehow with a trophy buck mere yards away with his nose in a scrape, I managed to overdraw by arrow and the nock had slid down my string and slipped off precisely at the moment I let the string go, a drop shot! Lesson learned...sandwich your

arrow nock between an upper and lower tied nock!

I have always viewed my bowhunting experiences in the field as a way to provide peaceful exercise. I can leave whatever worries I have at the base of the tree and climb up 10 feet to a peaceful utopia. But, as I explained earlier, I do have my disappointments in the field, however it is relaxing to me no matter the outcome. On the morning of November 25, 2017, I was sitting peacefully in a familiar stand. The pre-rut was on and sounds of horns clashing and grunting were heard only minutes after I settled in my tree stand. Probably an hour after sunrise, I heard the snapping of leaves and twigs and saw a doe with her head down running towards me on a trail I knew too well. Without hesitation I stood up as she ducked under the honeysuckle thicket to continue down the trail. I was only 5 yards away. Immediately afterwards, I saw a grunting buck walking fast step for step, exactly as she had just a few minutes earlier. I grinned internally, if that is such a thing, because he was set to walk right in front of me at 5 yards just as she had. I don't remember raising my bow, but remember aiming



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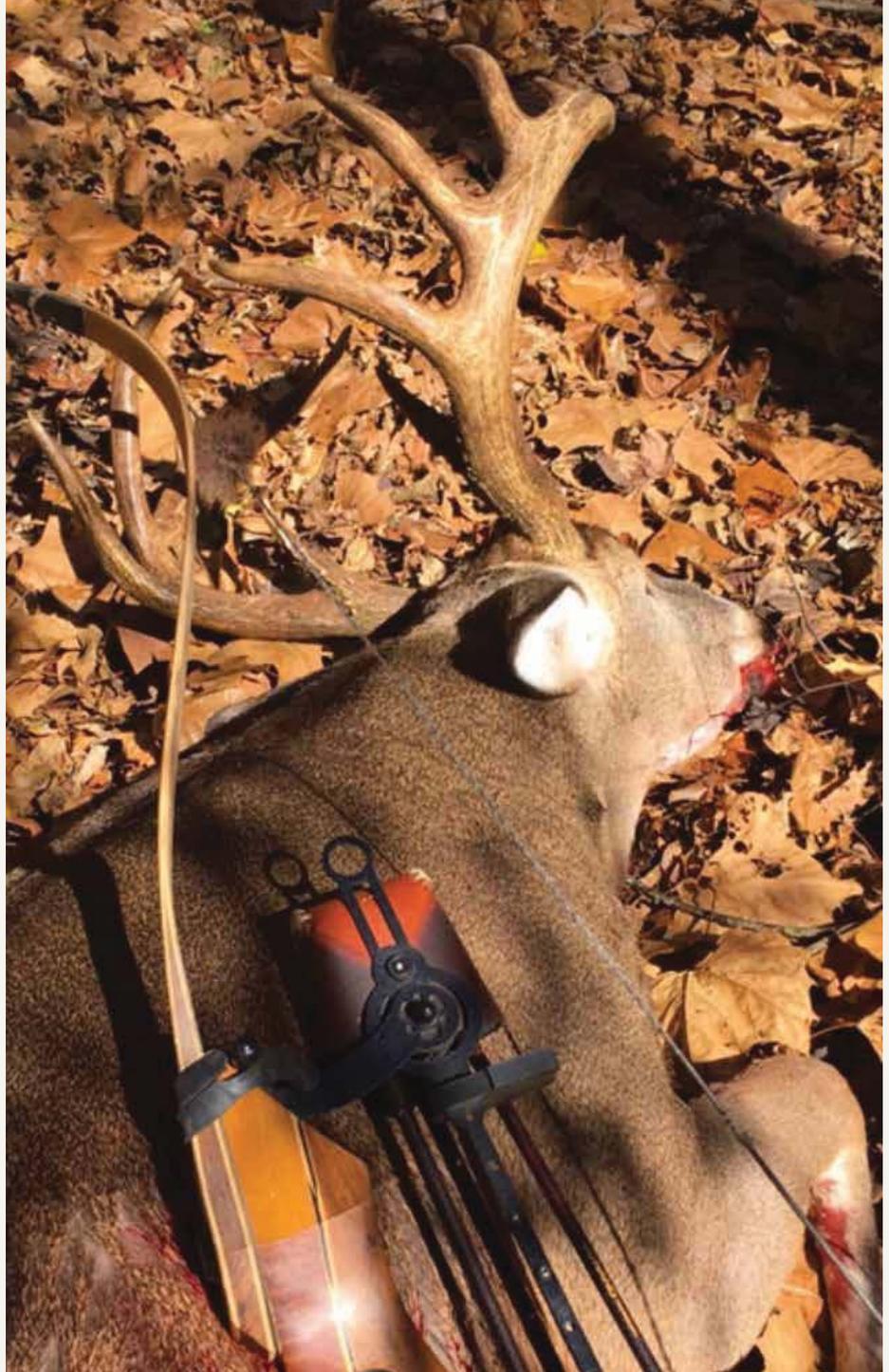
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down my arrow as he walked by at 5 yards. This sight was picture perfect! I was at full draw, anchor solid and still! I released the arrow. Then... "TWANG"...damn it! What was that? Arguably one of the largest bucks I have seen at my club was merely 5 yards away and he just trotted off with no arrow wound! I missed. What was the twang, the noise? And then I saw my arrow buried in the ground sideways with a Muscadine vine cut halfway between me and the deer. I hit a vine. All the mishaps in my bowhunting lifetime immediately began to haunt me again. But then the unexpected happened...he stopped! The ole rascal stopped at about 17-18 steps right in front of me gazing out and away into the sweetgum thicket. I guess he was looking for that twang noise. That pause bought me about 3 seconds to pull another arrow out of my quiver. He took a step or two and the only thing I remember is seeing my blue fletching pass through his rib cage. He bolted off into the river jungle and I collapsed back into the seat of my stand.

I prayed a lot those next 30 minutes before I climbed down. I prayed mostly for a clean kill, easy recovery and thanked Him for all the wonderful experiences and people to which bowhunting has exposed me. Archery can make a man humble and thankful! After climbing down and inspecting the shot site, I found a blood trail of three parallel paths produced from the entrance and exit wounds. I knew this was a good shot and according to my GAIA GPS app on my phone and a 5 minute soft walk/stalk, I had my hands around my 165" trophy 990 feet away from my



stand. Not having the time to admire his horns at the first encounter, I took a knee in the woods and absorbed this moment respectfully. Again I lowered my head in prayer and thanked God for allowing me to be so fortunate to harvest an animal of this caliber and with my homemade bow. How did this happen? Upon reaching camp, I sent texts and pictures to my various

hunting friends. Within an hour one of them called me on the phone and earnestly asked, "Did you really kill that deer with your recurve?" I humbly replied, "I did not! I believe that was the unluckiest deer in the woods today. I didn't shoot him; he must have walked into my arrow after he successfully dodged the first! These things never happen to me!"

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Mississippi Bowhunters Association Lifetime member, **JOEY BUCHANAN**, lives in Oxford, MS with his wife, two teenage sons and his two yellow labs.