

BRANDON GARDOM

MULEDEER

This story is lengthy but worth the read. My friend Brandon came to me in the spring with his Sako TRG that was lucky to hold 1.5-2.0 moa consistently. We talked about the area we both hunt and the various advantages of long range hunting. Brandon had always compensated for longer distances by simple hold over. Brandon chose the rebarrel his TRG in 338 Lapua and top it with a Leupold 4.5-14x with mil-dot and target knobs. He also chose to develop a load with H1000 and the Nosler 225 Accubond.

Brandon took my Long Range Hunting class in the early summer and did quite well. I watched him constantly shoot 1.25 – 1.75” groups @ 300 yards with his rebuilt TRG, even more impressive was his ability to shoot off of Stony Point shooting stix. I watch him shoot just less than 5 inches at 600 yards with them. Brandon spent some time over the summer practicing out to ranges in excess of 1200 yards and fine tuning his drop figures.

Mid-September, Brandon calls to tell me about the 6 ½ foot black bear he shot. The shot was 535 yards from the “stix” across a bowl. 1 shot into the off shoulder. The bear rolled over and stuck all 4 feet in the air and didn’t move a foot. This was a great start to a new season with a new rifle.

Hunted with Brandon for a couple of days during the opening days of elk season but we just could not put it together.

Brandon calls 4 days after I leave camp from the top of the mountain on his cell phone to tell me about the bull elk he “whacked”. Shot was .98 downhill on the cosine indicator, 752 yards across a canyon into an alder patch, shooting from the “stix”. 1 shot high shoulder and the bull was rolling down the hill before Brandon fully recovered from the recoil.

Thursday I play hooky from work and Brandon and I go hunting for elk. Our day starts off just great. We are greeted by snowing and foggy conditions that do not allow us to do the long range across the canyon hunt we had planned. Sometime around 10:30 or 11:00 the fog starts to lift. By 1:00 the sun actually comes out and starts to clear up. We start glassing across canyon alder thickets trying to locate elk bedded down. We spot several mule deer and I shoot some photos of them through my range finder @ 1019 yards. We see several does and I break out the Leupold 14-40x to try to locate a bedded buck near them. We had been at this picking apart of the brush pockets when Brandon says, ”hey look over there down that ridge face, is that white spot a deer?” I turn the spotting scope over to it and zoom in. It is a large deer butt. The deer is facing almost directly away from us and by position of the head appears to be sleeping. I can not see horns and tell Brandon to have a look. Brandon had looked for about 15 seconds when a 4 wheeler on a road a mile or so above it drove by. When the 4 wheeler drove by the buck lifted his head and revealed his horns. I jumped behind the spotting scope to get a look. When I looked the buck turned his head and I could quite clearly see a rack with good width and serious mass and we are about 2 miles or so away. We plot out a stalk for a finger ridge that will put us in a position across 2 draws in a position that I figure to be around 700-800 yards from the bedded deer. We hop in the truck and race over toward

the ridge that we had targeted. As we approach the ridge we run into a small problem we won't be able to see the buck from the spot we selected. We have only one option. To move down the near ridge and hope to find a hole in the brush clear enough to shoot out of. We move down the ridge about 800-900 yards just on the off side and pop up to the top every so far looking for a hole to shoot out of. We finally find a hole and locate the buck. We spend about 15 minutes searching for a spot where we can shoot through the brush and still have a clear shot at the buck (they don't get big by being visible). We finally pick a spot where Brandon can shoot from a sitting position using the Stix and almost see through the brush. I crawl ahead of him and snip a small handful of branches out of the way very quietly and scoot back to him. I range the buck at 324 yards, it is not a super long distance but the shot is quite difficult. Brandon has to needle holes in the brush to thread a bullet through and hit the buck. Now to add to the tough factor is the fact that the buck is facing at a slight quartering away position laying down. This presentation allows for a circle of "good" shot placement that is only about 3" in diameter right between the shoulder blades and centered over the spine. If we try to alert the deer with noise to stand he may run, stand up into a position where we don't have a shot or have to move to get a shot while he is alerted to our presence. Brandon chooses to take the shot and has not the slightest bit of doubt about taking the shot. Brandon dials up 3.50 moa for elevation, we detect no wind, we are downhill about .99 on the cosine indicator (not enough to worry about at this distance) Brandon launches the 225 Accubond down range at 3150 fps dropping its' prescribed 11.4 inches and impacts directly at the point of aim on the spine. The bullet enters the back smashing some 4-5 inches of spine and entering the chest cavity and not exiting. The buck does nothing more than drop his head to the dirt and Brandon's season has come to a very successful end. I was glad to be there to record the event on film it was a great hunt. Like I said before the distance was tame for this site, but given the conditions it was precision marksmanship in anybody's book.

