



big game hunting

Drama in the Woods & A Win at the Track

by Erik Wasell introduced by Evelina Aslund



met Evelina one lunch time as we work in the same building and meet occasionally. Evelina told me that she had about ten hunters who she had previously arranged elk hunts for but now she misses the trips with these hunters.

I am the hunt leader in our hunting team and when we hunt we stay in a cozy house on our hunting grounds where it is more than 20 km to the nearest settlement. We have poor cell phone coverage and no electricity. We can focus totally on being with good friend and enjoying our hunting. So I suggested that

we could open up the hunting opportunities to Evelina's guests and she can get back to the elk hunting that she loves. As a result we welcomed some hunters last season and they enjoyed it so much that they now want to come back this coming autumn.

Below is a story of one of my elk hunts which has a bit of a twist in the story. I hope you like it.

I grew up in a family where everyone was interested in hunting and fishing. We are four brothers and have hunted elk together for more than 30 years. Every year we brothers meet up in the fall to hunt moose with mother and father. The old family reunited. Last year I brought down a nice trophy with 16 tags on the same passport that I sit on now. Would history repeat itself? It promised to be an exciting afternoon. That same afternoon, the horse I owned together with other people, ran a major trot race.

It's Saturday in late October. The leaves had fallen to the ground several weeks ago. We are in Eastern Jämtland, Central Sweden. Now at the end of October there will be fewer and fewer people gathering to hunt moose. We were only two shooters and two that would bring their dogs and we had good expectations of the dogs, Sindra, Timja and Ari.

Beautiful Weather In Autumn

When we awoke in the morning a few hours before dawn; it was a starry night, very quiet



and a few degrees below zero. It felt even then that the day would have something special to offer. We had raffled passport the night before with the help of playing cards. After a joint breakfast and a few cups of coffee, it was time to put on our walking shoes and a warm jacket. I and Torbjörn had to go out half an hour early to bring us to this morning's session. As we walked to our stands it started to get a little brighter in the east and the sun began to get bigger. I stayed at the first stand we came to and Torbjörn went 300 yards further on. I began by lighting a bonfire mostly to see which way the smoke would draw. I continued to look at the fire to keep track of the winds direction as I enjoyed the sunrise.

Dogs Barking, But Far Away

Just then a bird came and visited me and sat right next to me and looked at my backpack as though it wanted a taste of something to eat. "Yes, you will get some of the sandwich. Come back in a moment though", I whispered. Ari, one of our dogs was running not far from me, but did not come up to me; she kept focused on her task and lumbered slowly but determinedly on. Twenty minutes later she came in contact with a moose but it went further and further away from where



we were sitting. Some more dogs could be heard joining Ari but in the far distance, so we sat contentedly in the glorious autumn weather. After sitting for around three hours we decided to cancel this morning's hunt. So we all went back to meet up in the hunting lodge and eat lunch together. It was a morning without much drama.

Best Towers

While the coffee pot simmering on the wood stove we decided to raffle where to sit for the afternoon hunt. As we were only two shooters we could choose the best two towers. Both were selected on the basis of the opportunities they would give us to get a moose and also to be exposed to a wonderful outdoor experience. Torbjörn dropped me at a small sawmill, which was close by to my stand, then he continued to drive on to his tower to sit and await the outcome of the afternoon. It would take me just another ten minutes to get to the tower where I would sit and as I walked along the path I thought about the horse I'm part owner of, Sanity, is his name and he is entered in trotting race later in the day. I brought my phone and hoped that there would be coverage so I could keep posted on how it went down at, Jägersro, where the race will take place.



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distance. It was certainly working well with his moose on their land. Here I sat and pondered on the possible outcome of the afternoon. It was hard to focus on just the hunt when the horse race would soon be starting. It was close to 3 o'clock and I felt nervous in the stomach. Was it the realization that the dogs bark was getting closer or that it was nearly time for the start of the trotting race? Perhaps a combination of the two.

Horn Broke The Lines

Now! Now! I was all stiff in the body but a dog was barking between where I was sitting and Torbjörn. One dog barking and then another one, which I knew was Timja, a young bitch who went with Tobias. The dogs barking became louder and more intense and now there was singing in the woods. It echoed against the rock behind me and the barking was getting closer. Now! Now! I heard the sound of the Timberjack, a forestry tractor we had previously brought to transport the moose carcass. It creaked and crashed where the moose and the dogs ran. I heard it clearer and clearer now and how the noise hit the bushes and trees and reverberated.

a thermos of coffee. I powered up my cell phone and called on the handler. "Tobias com!" I said in a low voice so as not to reveal myself. "Now I'm on location", I announced, and received an "OK", back. Almost no wind. The lake was like a huge sheet of glass. All was quiet except for a dog that was heard barking far away in the



When I arrived at my tower, I climbed up the ladder and sat down. I took a deep breath and settled down to wait with the gun across my knees. We have built our towers 8-10 feet off the ground to get a good safe location which means safer hunting as it gives some comfort and feels safer if a bear would come by. Also the slight elevation means that we have a better view of the surrounding countryside.

Exciting Wait

Whilst I waited my thoughts drifted back to what happened last year at the same place. Then, I had luck on my side and dropped a big moose with a nice trophy rack. What if it happens again? What if another big bull would show up in the same place again? I put the thoughts from my mind and concentrated on the task at hand and loaded my gun and put it safely to one side as I checked the signal on my cell phone and discovered that it was receiving.

Yep, here it can be a real rewarding afternoon, I said to myself. At 14.30 I wondered whether or not, Sanity, would start. There was half an hour left before the start of the race so I could calmly prepare

A minute later here came the big bull, out from the forest edge towards the water. With my gun against my shoulder and the huge moose captured in my rifle sight, I let the shot go. Timja was maybe twenty meters behind and when she came out of the forest the moose swim across the river where it was at its narrowest and there was Timja standing but continuing to bark. She tried constantly to swim out into the icy water without success.

Dogs Bark Stereo

The Moose swam towards my side of the river, but was still in the water. Now I understood why it echoed as it did. The other dog that would scan the area behind my back turned and ran towards the moose. Ari picked up where Timja had to stop. Now it was music. You could call it stereo, two dogs and a moose in the middle. Ari was just a few yards out close to the moose and becoming even more determined. I understood that the moose was injured so I knew I had to finish it as quickly as I could, but Ari was too close to the moose and I couldn't shoot. I had to wait for her owner to get to us so he could call her away. When Jorgen and his son, Jacob, finally arrived and called Ari off I was able to take my second shot and everything went as planned. The moose immediately dropped about twenty feet from the shore.



Now I could retrieve my backpack and go to join the rest of the hunting party that were attempting to recover the moose from the water. Then I remembered that trotting race, how did it go? But as we were thinking about recovering the moose from out of the water my mind was totally focused on that task and the thought of the trotting went out of my mind. But then I finally got the race result on my mobile, I just lifted my hat from my head and said, "Well I thank you". Sanity won his race and a large bull appeared in my riflescope, at just about the same moment. Well, I thank you!

Everyone congratulated me and we were all happy.

Then reality dawned once more as someone asked, "OK, but how do we get the moose up out of the water and bring it home?"

Vacant Wall

We barely had time to think about the idea when Tobias took out an axe and chopped a slender tree. Joel then put out two planks that we had brought with us and positioned them so that we could balance the carcass and pull

it up the planks with the rope tied around its horns and using Tobias's tree as a lever.

"No problem", said Joel. Everything worked out and we were able to pull the moose up out of the water. Once on dry land we could load it on to a small tractor. Now, we could leisurely walk home. It was dark but it was good to get the moose home using the light from the stars and the moon. As we followed the tractor I asked the 11 year old boy, Jakob, if he had any space on the walls in his room.

He answered quickly. "I have four walls in my room. Why do you ask?"

"If you would like, then you should get the trophy", I said.

"Thank you", he said with a huge smile on his face and a cheerful voice as we walked with light steps toward the car.

A hunting day to remember from the forests in Jämtland.

Text and photo: Erik Wasell

