

The TenPoint and I

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Warm and windy, 68, right now. I should not even go. I usually don't do well the first day of the season, Last year was a fluke. Last year I had doe dead by 7:15. It is opening day. I'll go.

It is a short walk and I am just heating up when I reach the tree. I suppose I am dressed strangely for deer hunting-short pants and a short sleeve shirt under my ASAT mesh, Ultimate 3-D camouflage. Traveling light, too. Just a few things in my pockets. The TenPoint Phantom crossbow rides nicely on my shoulder. We have done well, this crossbow and I. I wait.

I could shoot her easy. Probably make the landowner mad. Big cow and that signals time to leave. It is just 7:20, so I make the long, one minute walk to another stand and climb up.

Wind is picking up and it is warming. But it is so nice, I just don't feel like getting down. I watch the squirrels and little birds and about half-nap between bouts of careful observance. Funny how age and years of opening days round you and blunt the anticipation. I can sit here quietly and just enjoy the woods. I give a nod to Tam Apo with thanks for the morning and my health being enough to enjoy it.

He comes silently, gliding in and stops just out of range. I ease the TenPoint crossbow off the hook and try to silently change arrows. I am not going to ruin a \$10 broadhead on longbeard. Time slips and he putts and clucks away.

Coopers Hawk? I think so, maybe. Anyhow, one of the smaller, slicker economy models of woodland squirrel control devices. Every tree rat in the woods goes berserk. I grin to myself and seeing as how it after 10 and I am starving, make the call to get down.

On the way to the truck, I stop and pick some milkweed to use for wind checkers later and stop to admire a turkey feather and a nice deer track in the soft dirt. I smile as I cross the shallow creek-one of my favorite field dressing places.

I'll hit the woods again this afternoon. Maybe the cold wave will be starting down by then. I'll probably hunt behind the hayfield that needs cutting. For sure I'll be back in the morning and probably for the next few mornings. Fifty-five, I think. Fifty-five opening mornings for me. Maybe 56, I don't know for sure but thankee kindly, Tam Apo. I'll have another if you please.

Warm and windy. The usual opening day for me. The normal. And the afternoon passes without even a squirrel to break the boredom.

Even so, I enjoy the afternoon. I manage to not get too hot walking in and there is enough breeze to keep me from roasting.

My stand is comfortable and before I know it, it is dark. Time to brave the hayfield again. A morning for which to wish. Cool, bordering cold and calm. The plan is simple. I will hunt stand #2 until 8:30.

If I have not seen anything by then, I shall move to stand #3 and hunt until 10:30. I had not planned on the cramp in my neck at 9:30.

I have had considerable work done on my neck and when I feel a cramp coming, I get down. I wish I waited three more minutes. With a sort and a stomp and hearty hi-ho whitetail, she was gone. She had been on her way between #2 and #3.

Oh well, that is deer hunting and I have the whole season to go including the afternoon. I love afternoon hunts. Thank you Tam Apo.

On the way to the stands, I see seven does and three bucks. I also see a flock of turkeys. It is 4:10. Am I late? I reach my tower stand, a staggering eight feet off the ground and settle in to the plop of acorns and persimmons.

It is a pleasant afternoon, just cooling. I can hear kids playing at a nearby house.

He comes at dusk, just nibbling along. I saw him the minute he stepped out and I have the TenPoint Phantom crossbow at the ready. Thirty one yards.

I have ranged the tree he will pass. That makes him 30. That is the first dot, one inch high. That is where I hold. I squeeze the trigger, the arrow is gone and he drops in his tracks.

An excellent way to start the year and about as fine as deer meat gets. I estimate he will weight about 80-pounds, a fat spike. Perfect.

The TenPoint and I make an awesome combination and I still have the season to go.

Thankee Tam Apo, thankee kindly.

Deer kill on the rise

According to figures from the TWRA, the state's deer bow kill is steadily climbing. On the opening weekend of 2012, last weekend, Tennessee bow hunters killed 3050 deer compared to 2811 on opening weekend a year ago.

The increase of 239 is double the increase from 2010 to 2011. The figures are somewhat of an indication of two things.

First, the deer herd is healthy. Despite isolated outbreaks of EHD, the overall population is strong,

And second, the weather has cooperated the last two opening weekends.

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