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Scoring Big on Mississippi's Double



"Double Duce," a 19-pont nontypical buck that scored 193 on the Boone and Crockett scale.

The 2003-2004 hunting season in New York, I returned to produced many unforgettable Mississippi in late November moment for me in the deer woods. 2003 and again soon after the new Besides regular trips to my prop- year in 2004.

My Mississippi hunts took me back to the Woodville area and the Tatum Plantation, which is owned and operated by Alan and Renee Priest. In 2002 I shot a 158-inch 10-pointer there, and I hoped my return visits were just as productive. (The 2002 hunt was featured in the January/February 2004 issue of the National Whitetail Hunter's Journal.)

Gene Curry, my friend and guide for both trips, did not disappoint my friends or me during our trip in November 2003. My friends Joe and Phil took their largest bucks to date. In fact, Phil took two nice Natchez bucks, a 10-pointer and an 8-pointer, and Joe took a handsome 140-inch 8-pointer, I shot a respectable 8-pointer, but little did I know what awaited me a month later.

Gene and I talk regularly throughout the year, but as January drew near, the number of calls increased dramatically. Every-

thing was set for me to arrive after New Year's Day and hunt along for a trophy whitetail, and later have three friends join me to finish the trip on a management hunt.

The time finally arrived and I flew into Baton Rouge. Gene met me at baggage claim and then we left for Mississippi. I was excited about the hunt, but when Gene told me about the buck we were going to go after, my anticipation grew. During the fall I watched a video showing this world-class whitetail feeding in a food plot. The huge buck got his nickname "Double duce" from the landowner's sons, because he had two kickers on both G-2s. The landowner and his wife put old "Double duce" off limits, because they thought it best for him to die of old age or let someone in the family harvest him. Needless to say, I was surprised and excited when Gene said we could take him if we were lucky enough to see him. I could not get to camp fast enough!

A Late Start

After we arrived at the plantation and took time to greet everyone, we changed clothes and headed out for the afternoon hunt. Although we were running late,

Gene didn't think it would hurt to sneak into a blind to see what would happen. I'll be thankful for that decision as long as I live! Gene and I eased toward a food plot, and as we approached we noticed two yearling deer already feeding. It was tricky but with some luck we got into the blind without spooking the deer. We then eased into our seats and got ready.

The two yearlings fed out of the plot and eased into the woods. Gene and I talked briefly about our hunt not being very productive yet. However, you never know when a rutting buck might appear. We sat quietly the next 45 minutes, watching for any motion at the edge of the woods. The only activity was a group of loud crows in the plot to our right, which entertained me until Gene saw a doe walk out of the woods.

She took several steps into the plot before we noticed a deer following her. I looked through my binoculars and my heart nearly stopped. I heard Gene whisper, "That's our boy." Double Duce stood about 150 yards from us, but a small tree next to the blind prevented me from getting a clear shot. As much as I wanted to put the rifle up, the branches held me back.

While Double Duce stood there



Rich Russell shot "Double Duce" in January 2004 on the Tatum Plantation while hunting with guide and friend Gene Curry.

watching the doe, I got a better look and my nerves kicked in again. Trying to settle myself down, I turned to look at the crows again, I told Gene the birds were still there, but he thought it best to forget the crows and watch the deer!

To my disappointment, the doe eventually turned back and walked into the woods with Duce in tow. Gene turned to me and said: "That could have been our only chance. If his girlfriends spends the next week or so moving at night or not moving at all, we've had it." Another 30 minutes passed without a flicker of a

tail, but then I noticed movement in front of the blind. A doc cleared the trees and our boy was right behind her! This time no branches blocked my view and only 120 yards of air stood between my .30-06 and Double duce.

I followed him for what seemed a lifetime, patiently waiting for the perfect broadside shot. I then had to wait for him to straighten his head before shooting, because when he turned his head before shooting, because when he turned his head, his antlers covered his shoulder. Finally he stood straight enough for a clean shot. I whis-

pered to Gene the buck was clear and, after getting the go-ahead, I put down Double Duce.

Conclusion

I knew he was impressive, but I didn't realize I had killed a local legend until a procession of people came by to admire him. This massive buck is a nontypical 21-pointer with 19 scorable points. A measurement of his main frame 8-point rack scores the monarch with 172 Boone and Crockett inches, and by adding all the extra kickers and stickers, he finished at 193-4/8 Boone and Crockett. He was truly the buck of a lifetime!

To top off this trip, my friends joined me four days later. They shot some nice bucks and, in line with good management practices, we also harvested several does. Two of the guys even killed their largest bucks to date, finishing the tip on a high note.

I was impressed with Mississippi's deer hunting before that trip, but now I'm hooked. In fact, I'm probably the only New Yorker looking to plant a Magnolia tree in my yard just to keep the memories of this trip fresh in my mind!