



**NOVEMBER 2005
ARIZONA KAIBAB MULE DEER HUNT**

I told Mark Boulanger, my guide, at the start of the 2005 ten day late Kaibab mule deer season that the best thing a hunter can hear from a Ph or guide is “That’s a monster. We got to shoot that one.” In over 50 big game hunts around the world, trust me, you do not hear that often but this was going to be one of those times.

In 1995, when I began applying for tags for all the species of all the western states, I called Garth Carter of The Hunting Fool publication and asked him whom should I call if I draw the late Kaibab mule deer tag. Hands down he informed me to call Duwane Adams owner of Arizona Big Game Hunts (520 385-4995). No one knows that area better then he I was told. So over the next ten years I called Duwane yearly and he told me what to apply for and was always encouraging.

As luck would have it, when I arrived back from an African hunt in July, I found out that I had drawn the tag. Not really expecting that to happen, I had already booked three other hunts from September thru November. So I just squeezed that one in also with great expectations. Mr. Adams kept reassuring me of the 180 inch plus bucks we would harvest if we held out.

After a quick stay at home for four days, after returning from a Canadian hunt, I was off on a flight to Las Vegas plus a three hour drive to Fredonia, Arizona. That is right where Ryan Hatch and Muley Crazy magazine originates. I met Duwane and my guide Mark and got settled into my room. The first thing he asked was, “Did you do as I told you and know where your gun hits at 400 yards?” and I reassured him I had. He said this hunt could be a little harder because of the warm daytime temperatures and the lack of snow but again reassurance came with that comment. “If you hold out and pass all the bucks under 180 inches you will get a mule deer to be proud of and trust me they are here and Mark consistently gets bug bucks,” he said.

After the usual pre-hunt conversations with all the other hunters lucky enough to draw tags, Mark decided on a 4 AM wake up and leaving early. It didn’t take long after talking with Mark to recognize that he is a very serious hunter like myself with a lot of experience and knowledge. He definitely didn’t do this for the money. He guided just to be able to hunt more. Sometime in a long hunting career it becomes just as enjoyable, exciting and rewarding to take someone else hunting and let them harvest the game and Mark had long reached that point.

The first four days were basically the same. After breakfast, we would go to areas way before sunrise that Mark knew well and were well off the beaten path. After hiking in a long way, we would carefully glass the semi-open terrain to see all kinds of does and non shooter bucks feeding and milling about. The bucks were just starting to chase the does by the looks of things but the rut was on the way. The mornings were chilly about 20 degrees or so but as soon as the sun came up it warmed the 6000 foot elevation desert air quickly to almost 60 degrees by early afternoon. By 9 AM, the deer would bed and we would head off to other areas that we could meticulously glass for hours finding the deer bedded in the shade. The afternoons were a repeat of the mornings. All told, we would see 15-20 bucks a day and up to 100 doe a day. You could not see any sign of let up or frustration in Mark's face as the days went by. Some of the guys in camp had chances on very good bucks of which some were successful and some not. We saw a lot of small and medium size bucks on the way to the check station all of which were smaller than some of the bucks we were passing up. Mark kept saying, "Our chance will come and it only gets better as the days go on because of the rut." Two days before Thanksgiving, Duwane came with Mark and me because his hunter Cort from California was told to stay in bed at least one day.

Cort who happens to be a very big fellow with a heart to match had recently had surgery on both his feet which would cripple most anyone but here he was trying to navigate the ravines, hillsides and draws. Well his feet looked horrible especially the right great toe. Swollen, oozing copious amounts of pus and denuded of skin, I lanced open his abscess and drained it and gave him specific doctor instructions to rest the foot for at least one day which he agreed to, at least till 7 AM the next morning when he couldn't stand it any longer and drove himself out to the hunting area.

Back to the story, the morning was unsuccessful as far as locating any big bucks but I continued to take in all the unbelievable scenery. So as usual, we went to another area to glass the middle of the day. We were glassing across a very steep canyon which was an off shoot of Kanab canyon which leads into the Grand Canyon. At 2:30, Duwane and Mark spotted, at over 1000 yards, the back end of a large deer as he stood up from his bed in thick cover. We saw him for less than a minute but when he showed us his head gear for a brief period we all knew he was the man. He had it all; length, height, deep forks, width, weight and kickers. We named him **Brutus** and vowed to hunt him the rest of the days just as he took two steps and disappeared. We watched that area till dark and never saw him again. As we left, Duwane said without hesitation, "If you hunt him till the end, you will get a shot at him." I took that as a big confidence booster because with my experience with big whitetails you likely would never get another chance.

On the way home, a plan was formulated to circle the gorge on to a distant opposite overlooking peak early in the morning to gain a better look into his presumed home. The day before Thanksgiving, we made it all the way to the predetermined peak just as the light was good enough to glass. Mark and I as well as Art glassed the mountain tops across the gorge for hours to no avail. All we saw was an injured buck I had spotted. We made the decision to cross the gorge and go into the area where we had seen Brutus.

After a vertical descent and ascent, we finally arrived on a point that overlooked the area. Disturbingly, the mountain top was devoid of fresh doe sign. We surmised Brutus was just possibly resting there as a stop over to his final destination where the ladies were gathered which happened to be only ½ mile from where the truck was parked. By dark we had not seen him or anything else so we made the long arduous journey out. Beat and tired we got back to the truck but not before we saw a very large bodied dark deer pushing does ½ mile from the truck. Too dark to see his antlers, we postulated that maybe Brutus had joined the does after crossing the gorge the night before. Now the plan for Thanksgiving Day was to return and hunt from the hillside opposite from where we saw the large dark buck.

Thanksgiving AM found Mark and I on the opposing hillside across a draw well before light. As the first early rays of light came up, we immediately spotted does all across the facing J shaped hillside. A few of the groups had medium sized bucks within them. As I scanned to the right, I spotted some does at the bottom of a ridge that was two ravines over from us and then I saw the dark buck with his easily seen antlers despite the very poor light conditions and the 500 yards that separated us. I told Mark to get the spotting scope on him. As he did, I pleaded for him to tell me it was shooter buck. He said he thought so but he had to lift his head to get a good look. Just as the buck lifted his head, I asked Mark if I could see him through the spotting scope and the famous although rarely heard words were spoken. "No Paul, you don't need to look at him. We are going rite now to shoot that buck. It's Brutus." Mark said as he excitedly packed up his stuff and ended with, "Hurry up, let's go." Now as any hunter knows, those words or phrases like them tend to do something to all of us. Even the most experienced hunter starts to get the gitters and in a bad way. We quickly make our way down a ravine and onto the ridge crest that separated us from Brutus. Mark was moving at a Cheetah's pace and I told him we had to slow down before I got winded which would seriously hinder my ability to shoot as if the anxiety I had already wasn't going to be a big enough factor. As I tried to fashion an adequate rest on the top of the hill, Mark spotted the buck within a thicket slowly following a single doe. Just then before I had a good rest, multiple shots started to ring out from a couple of ridges beyond us, nine to be exact, which caused the doe to nervously start making her way down the ridge into the trees below. As Brutus immediately followed her, Mark urgently insisted that I shoot him thru the bushes. I set his frame pack upright as quickly as I could and put the rifle on top knowing full and well our position and secrecy was now compromised. I found Brutus in the scope as he trotted down the hill after the doe and fired. He bolted as most animals do and I caught him with another bullet just before he was going to disappear below my line of sight. He dropped right there and expired. I tell this as if this happened like a well rehearsed dance but it was anything like that, for both Mark and I were a wreck and had serious cases of buck fever.

After he was down, the anticipation of seeing him up close took over because we both knew he was big but how big was the question. I guess we thought about asking each other how big we estimated Brutus to be but we never uttered a word. We just threw our packs on and hurriedly crossed the ravine that separated us and made our way up to him. As we approached Brutus there was definitely no ground shrinkage on this monarch. The

jubilant, congratulations and celebration began, for we had set out to harvest this magnificent trophy two days earlier and had done it. There laid before us a trophy of a life time with all the qualities any hunter would dream of. As we admired Brutus, a hunter from Iowa came over the hill top in front of us and told us he had also seen Brutus last night and had watched our whole hunt unfold from a distant before he could put a stalk on Brutus himself. He congratulated us and snapped a few photos of Brutus before he left. We spent a good deal of time with the expected photo session before the cleaning and caping began. After all was done and ready to pack, we finally put a rough field tape to him and Brutus came up having a score of 207. We were just elated and that feeling lasted the whole rest of the day. We packed him out and drove him to the check station where we had many on lookers stop up us to view this giant. Back at the hotel, Duwane and the rest of the guides there couldn't have been any happier for Mark and me then if they had harvested this grand trophy themselves. The final official score turned up to be 210 5/8 gross.

First, I would like to thank God for the opportunity to hunt this magnificent animal as well as my family for putting up with my affliction. I can't say enough about my guide, Mark Boulanger. I would hunt with him anywhere and anytime. Duwane Adams lived up to the reputation that preceded him and I can't wait to see what happens when I draw a coveted bull elk tag.

Lastly, I feel as if I have to share this secret with everyone since you will hear about it soon enough. I have been field testing an unbelievable product from Robinson Outdoors Inc. named "**Sportsmen's Edge**". It is a nutritional supplement plus a complete multi-vitamin that was specially formulated to enhance your vision, hearing, stamina, immune function, concentration abilities, circulation as well as tolerance to cold and altitudes and control odor. It is made for all us outdoorsmen and women and without a doubt has fantastic results. It will be available soon/early in 2006. At a cost per month not much more then the vitamin you are taking now, it is an excellent replacement. Keep on the look out for it or contact Robinson Outdoors Inc. (507 263-2885).

