



Dewclaw Archery recently had the opportunity to talk with Dave Chapman who drew a controlled hunt bow tag for the coveted Wenaha unit in northeastern Oregon. The Wenaha unit is a managed unit that's well known for the trophy elk it produces, but it's also known for the lottery type odds of drawing a tag. For instance, in 2007 there were nearly 2200 applicants for only 21 tags. That equates to less than a 1% chance, and it took Dave thirteen years to beat the odds and draw the tag.

Dewclaw: Where was this hunt and why was it so special?

Dave: The hunt was in the Wenaha unit and the reason it was so special was that it took me thirteen years to draw the tag. In addition, several of my friends have drawn the tag and I'm the last one in the group to get it.

Dewclaw: What did you do to prepare physically and mentally for a hunt like this?

Dave: For physical exercise I lifted weights and ran. I also hiked a minimum of 10 miles in the mountains each weekend with a 45-50 lb pack. I did this for approximately six weeks prior to opening day. Mentally I prepared myself to be in the unit for the entire season or approximately 30-days.



Source: http://www.dfw.state.or.us/resources/hunting/big_game/units/bigmap.asp

Dewclaw: What about practicing with your equipment?

Dave: I practiced everyday shooting at least 20-25 arrows up to 60-yards. Not that I intended to shoot an animal at that range, but by practicing at 40-60 yards, the 20-30 yard shots seemed easy. I also practices with both field tips and broadheads.

Dewclaw: Can you tell us the story about your new Mathews bow?

Dave: The local archery shop sponsored a seminar featuring Cameron Haines. I had forgotten about the seminar, but I called the shop for something else and was asked if I was going to attend. They said they'd hold a ticket for me so I changed my mind and attended the seminar. As it turned out, it was an awesome seminar and afterward they had a raffle where they gave out about \$5000 in prizes. One of those prizes was Mathews S2 bow with my number on it.

Dewclaw: What other equipment did you use?

Dave: On the bow I had a Black Gold Flashpoint five pin sight, a Drop Zone arrow rest and a Limbsaver S-Coil stabilizer. I also used a Scott release. As far as arrows, I used Goldtips with Ironhead 100 broadheads. My elk call was a Glen Berry diaphragm.



Dewclaw: Did you use any scent control?

Dave: The only thing I used was some scent control deodorant and soap.

Dewclaw: When you think about all your practicing and the actual shot, what do you believe is the most important element?

Dave: The most important part of the shot is the follow through. You need to make sure during the last few seconds of the shot that you're composed, and you actually remember what you did. For example, you're sure where the pin was on the animal and what pin was used. I always try not to rush a shot, and it usually takes me about 8-10 seconds to draw, anchor and release.

Dewclaw: What do you think gave you the greatest advantage to secure the animal and have a successful hunt?

Dave: Probably a combination of the equipment, physical conditioning and the mental component. I was confident that I could stay in with the animals until I got one because I wasn't going to go home until I ran out of time or got an animal. So I had the physical conditioning and I had the mental conditioning to stay in there by myself for up to thirty days if I needed to. I also had provisions at my vehicle so every week or so I could hike out and restock.

Dewclaw: What do you like about bow hunting?

Dave: What I like about bow hunting is the fact that I'm in the outdoors a lot longer. It's not over in one or two days because you usually don't get an animal that quickly. With bow hunting, you need good hunting skills to be successful so you learn a lot more about the animals, about outdoor skills and how to hunt.

Dewclaw: Do you have any superstitions or traditions when you hunt?

Dave: Not really. I'm not a very superstitious guy.

Dewclaw: What did you pack in with you and how were you going to make it last 30-days if needed?

Dave: I took a bivy sack, a down sleeping bag, a pad, minimum clothes, food, iodine tablets for water treatment, basically very minimal supplies. I was in for five days then came back out to the trailhead and got enough food for seven more days. My plan was to keep going in and out until I ran out of time or filled my tag.

Dewclaw: What do people want to know when they hear you've done a hunt like this?

Dave: One of the most common questions people ask me about a hunt like this is "How can you go out there by yourself?" and "Were you afraid?" I've done hunts like this before and I'm not afraid, but you can get bored. When I was hunting in the morning and the evening it was great. During the rest of the time I'd occupy myself by focusing on my routine such as preparing my pack food for the next day, treating both my pack and camp water, and showering (if you can call it that). Once I did this, I found that there was really only about two hours that I had nothing to do and then I might take a nap.

Dewclaw: When did you get to the unit and how long did it take to see any animals?

Dave: I hiked in the day before the season started and on my way in I passed close to a herd of elk that had a couple of bulls bugling. I also saw came across a huge rub. When I got to where I was going to camp, there were two or three different bulls bugling and this was about one-o'clock in the afternoon. That evening a herd of elk came into a meadow by my camp and passed within forty yards of my sleeping bag. This herd had about twenty cows and a huge 7x8 bull with a broken top on one side. A few days later this same herd came through my camp and passed within thirty-yards of my sleeping bag after it had gotten dark. **Dewclaw:** Were there any missed opportunities during the early part of the hunt?



Dave: The elk were bugling early on, but they weren't responding well to my calls, but as the season went on, they began to respond more. I bugled in a nice 5x5 to eight steps, but when I looked to my left there was a nice 6x6 that I hadn't seen. I chose to pass on the 5x5 and didn't get an opportunity for a shot on the 6x6. On another morning I saw a herd of elk feeding. The wind was perfect and I snuck within 100-yards of them. This herd had about twenty cows and an absolutely monstrous 7x7 bull. Unfortunately, they were feeding in the opposite direction of me. I did hear bulls bugle and saw elk every day I was there.



Dewclaw: Were there indications of elk in the evenings?

Dave: Usually in the evenings the elk would keep me awake with their bugling. In fact, there was one night that I had bulls on either side of my sleeping bag about 200 yards apart. One of the bulls would bugle, practically scream, and before he would finish the other one would scream. They were bugling on top on each other and I'm lying there thinking that I'm glad they don't eat people.

Dewclaw: Did you see many other animals while you were back there?

Dave: I saw about eight bears and a lot of turkeys. I wasn't aware there were turkeys in there so that was a surprise. I actually returned a day and a half later to the location where I cleaned my elk to remove ribbons and there was a bear feeding on the carcass.

Dewclaw: Tell us about the day you got your animal?

Dave: On the day I got my elk, I'd hunted in the morning and called in a 5x5 but passed on the shot. About 5:30 in the evening I set up on a wallow not too far from camp. There were elk bugling on both sides as well as behind me. The wind wasn't stable that evening. Instead of straight thermals, there was a prevailing wind but it kept switching direction. I was concerned that if something came within 200 yards of me, it was probably going to smell me. In fact, this happened to me earlier in the week at the same spot. I could tell this wallow had elk at it every day so I built a ground blind and set up some shooting lanes. You kind of get to know the voices of these bulls. One of the herd bulls was to my right and another herd bull was to my left and they were both bugling. There were also several satellite bulls bugling as well. So there was quite a bit of activity and it was all reasonably close, probably within 400-500- yards of me. One of the satellite bulls was moving toward one of the other herds. He got to within 150-yards of me and I realized that there was a good chance that he was going to come by. The wind was still switching and I was sure he was going to smell me before he got into shooting range. Not entirely sure what to do, I laid flat on the ground hoping that would control my scent. As I lay there, I could hear the bull bugling and getting closer and closer then pretty soon I could hear him walking and branches breaking. I finally got up on my knees and could see he was coming up behind me on my left. If he kept coming, he was going to pass within about ten yards of me, which he did. I came to full draw and he stopped in front of me and let out a bugle, but I didn't have a clean shot because of branches. He started to walk again and I let down then he walked behind a big fir tree and I drew again. He stepped out from behind the tree at about 20-yards and bugled again-that's when I shot.



Dewclaw: So he didn't even know you were there?

Dave: He had no idea. In fact when I shot, I knew I hit him where I had aimed, but I didn't actually see the arrow because of the short distance and it went so fast. As it turned out, I shot all the way through him.

Dewclaw: Now the work began?

Dave: Yes. I butchered, bagged and packed it to the creek where I hung it. Then I called the outfitter on the satellite phone and had a packer in to pick it up a day-and-a-half later.

Dewclaw: Did you get it scored?

Dave: Unofficially it measured a conservative 330-340.

Dewclaw: Do you have any advice for other archers?

Dave: Get away from all the people as much as you can and find animals that aren't hunted. That's what makes the Wenaha unit so great. There's a high bull to cow ratio and that helps, but there's not anybody in there.

