



# The Next Level: Brady's Big Buck

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Readers of *The Goldthwaite Eagle's Mills County Hunting Guide* have just about seen Brady Westlund grow on our pages over the years.

Brady has been a friend of the family for years, hunting and fishing with me. He is one of the kids I know that lives in the city, but has a country boy's heart. He comes to visit several times a year, and we fish, we hunt turkey in the spring and the deer in the fall.

He may be 35-years younger than me, but he has become one of my favorite hunting buddies. He is more like a nephew than a friend, and my kids even call him "cousin Brady."

Brady has gone through the process of rising through the hunting ranks. When he was younger, he learned by shooting does, then the cull bucks, and now he has graduated to hunting trophy bucks.

There are several reasons we take people through this process. When kids and first-time hunters come out to the ranch, we have them shoot does first. This is a way to have an exciting hunt and harvest the does we need to for management purposes, and it allows the new hunter to practice making a good, clean shot.

Missing or wounding a deer is something we hate to see, but it happens. We have found that once someone can make a good shot on a doe, they can make a better shot on a big buck. The first time a new hunter sees that big, trophy buck, the buck fever sometimes can get the best of them, and while losing a doe to the buzzards is sad, losing that big buck is a tragedy.

Brady has gone through this process over the years. He has done

well and worked his way up to trophy buck hunter. So this past fall, we decided after having seen a lot of these nice bucks to start the day off in the blind and then try to rattle one up later in the day.

In the morning from the blind, we saw a lot of deer but nothing in the trophy buck area. When the deer movement slowed down, we quietly slipped out of the stand and slowly started walking the brush, careful to stay downwind.

The first time we rattled, we rattled out a big buck, but when he didn't see any other bucks or any does, he turned right back around. About 30 minutes later in another spot, we rattled again and brought out a small buck, but he wasn't what we were looking for. Then another 30 minutes later in yet another spot, we rattled a third time, about 75 to 100 yards from the brush.

It was there that we saw a nice, big buck come out, but he went into the tall grass and was hard to see. It took awhile, but eventually Brady got a clear sight of his shoulder, and then propped his rifle up on his knee. There was a "click." The rifle misfired.

I was proud that Brady kept his head, cycled a new round in, didn't lose his cool, and didn't lose sight of the buck which, by now having heard that click like we did, had started to amble back toward the brush.

I grunted and the buck heard it. He turned around and presented Brady with a good broadside shot. Brady was kneeling, now under more time pressure and the strain of a misfire, but he managed to get off a good shot it seemed.

Of course, with our wildlife management at the ranch over the last several years, our bucks are bigger

and stronger, so that buck took the shot like a champ and ran into brush.

We let it sit for awhile, and we

*See the next page ...*



*Brady Westlund downed this heavy-horned ten point buck on the XTC Graves Family Ranch in northeast Mills County.*

*Editor's Note: Brady is also featured on the cover of this year's Mills County Hunting Guide. He is dragging his buck out of the brush into the tall grass where he could get a truck in to pick up his buck.*