

# Train Wreck Elk Hunt, From Page 14

only to find him bent over pointing to a speck of blood the size of a match head. "Oh no," I said. "This is not good."

I got a sick feeling way down in my stomach. I was afraid we were going to be in for a long day... and probably end up never finding my bull.

I started to doubt what I thought I saw in the meadow when I made my shot. How high was my shot? Was it too far back? Did I really see my arrow sunk to the fletchings?

I was embarrassed and quickly getting upset. The only thing I could think to do was try to find my bull. So I turned back to following the tracks. This gave me something positive to focus on and gave Mat and Doug space to whisper to each other how low our chances were of finding this bull.

A few hundred yards later, we found my arrow. I hoped for pink, frothy blood on the shaft. I was disappointed to see dark red blood and red meat on it instead. On the bright side (and I was looking for ANY bright side), the whole arrow was bloody, even the fletchings. Mat thought the arrow had probably been pulled all the way through the bull by passing trees.

After thirty more minutes of slowly following the elk's tracks, Mat put his hand on my shoulder. He put his binoculars up to his eyes. But after a few seconds he let them drop and shook his head in disgust. He pointed and said, "That misshapen triangle down there is the right color, but the wrong shape to be an elk. I think some SOB's piled a wall tent down there in the pines and left it. You're not supposed to do that in a wilderness area. You're supposed to pack it in and pack it out."

We again turned our attention back to the tracks at hand, but after another 100 yards it was evident that the tracks were leading down to the piled up tent. Mat stopped us again and

took another look. When he dropped his binos this time, his look of disgust was replaced with a big grin. "That's not a tent... that's your elk!"

I tried (and failed) to contain my excitement as we made our way down to the tan pile in the trees. I thought it was a victory of self control that I waited until I made sure the bull was dead before I let out a cheer and hugged everyone. It seems that I turn into a hugger when I bag a big bull.

The bull tried unsuccessfully to run downhill between two pine trees. His head was wedged with his chin straight up between them. His antlers were pointed down with the tips stuck into the dirt. His whole body was splayed prone behind his head. "I knew it was the right color," said Mat. "It just didn't look like the right shape until we got closer. What a train wreck!"

It took considerable engineering by Mat and some muscle to get the bull unwedged from the trees. Then we took photos and began the processing of the elk. As we cut up the elk we went over the scenario of my shot.

My shot entered up high behind the shoulder penetrating all the way to the fletchings just like I thought. Since the bull was quartering slightly toward me, the arrow cut down and across. The broad head stuck out way back in his paunch on the other side. The bull spilled very little blood onto the ground because the entry wound was up high and the exit was plugged for the most part by the arrow shaft.

I'm a lucky guy. I was lucky that the elk left clear tracks to follow. But the real stroke of luck was the bull slamming into those two trees. "If he didn't wedge himself between those trees," said Mat. "We might not have ever found this elk. For once, I am glad to see a train wreck."



Steve and Doug with Steve's bull as it ended up "train wrecked" between two trees in Idaho.

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