



When You've Got It, You've Got It...

**By Steve Bridges
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As I've told our readers, I got my bull elk in Idaho last year, and it took a lot of hard work. *You can read all the details starting on page ten of this year's publication.*

I spent about nine months training myself physically with hard cardio workouts to get in shape. I spent about the same amount of time shooting my bow and learning all about my archery and camping equipment.

I also packed and repacked my backpack and gear. I examined all the maps of the hunting area, talked with the outfitter, and poured over harvest stats. Debra was watching me the whole time wondering what all the fuss was about.

Debra heard me tell my elk hunt story over and over to friends, family and anyone else I could corner. One Sunday after lunch I told my story yet again. Debra seemed to wake up. She asked me, "Don't I have a bow?"

"Yes, I got you one a few years ago for Christmas," I reminded her.

Debra stated right then and there that she wanted to go bow hunting and kill a whitetail buck.

"Okay," I replied. "I'll get your bow out of the barn and we'll start practicing. It might take a while to get the hang of shooting your bow. And then we'll need to do some more prep work and ..."

"No, I think I'll go today," she replied matter-of-factly.

I just stared at first, because surely my wife understood the gravity of becoming an archery hunter. I pointed out that she would need to really commit herself to the pursuit.

According to me, she'd probably need to shoot for about a month to build her strength and confidence. Then we'd need to wait for the exact right wind conditions.

I stated flatly that it could take at least two months of preparation before she'd be ready to arrow a buck.



Debra Bridges bagged this nine point buck with her bow last season on the XTC Ranch in northeast Mills County. Debra is a life long deer hunter, but this is Debra's first ever archery deer. Way to go Debra!

"No, no... isn't archery season going on right now? I think I'll go out this afternoon," Debra insisted. "Can you go get my bow out of the barn?"

Incredulous but obedient like the good husband I am, I just said, "Sure, I'll go get it out of the barn after lunch." After lunch, Debra came outside

still in her church clothes smelling of perfume and with her hair still done up nicely from church.

She grabbed her bow and nocked an arrow. She took exactly three shots at 10 yards at the target. I know it was three shot because that is the number of arrows she has. Her shots landed squarely in the lung area.

"Okay, I'm good," she announced.

"Well let's go spend the night at the ranch," I told her. "It might take a few weekends out there to arrow a buck." Debra shrugged and agreed. She decided to go out to the ranch ahead of the kids and I that evening.

I put Debra's bow into her suburban while she went inside to change into camo. My suggestion that she shower in scent free soap before changing into hunting clothes fell on deaf ears. She was done taking advice. She was on a mission.

Debra drove out to hunt while I lagged behind packing up the kids. It takes about 15 minutes to get to the ranch from our house and another 10 minutes to get to the stand. And lo & behold, before the kids and I even left our house, I got a call from Debra saying she had arrowed a buck.

I thought at first she was pulling my leg, but she said she was sure she nailed a nice one, maybe a nine or 10-point buck.

Incredulous, I loaded the kids up and we got out there to find, sure enough, there was a blood trail. A little while later we found her buck in the brush.

"See, there's nothing to this," Debra joked with me. "I don't know about those months and months of prep work, Steve. Why don't you just take three shots in the yard and go kill the thing."

I couldn't help but roll my eyes. All I could say was, "You just don't understand, honey..."

She just shrugged her shoulders and said, "I guess ... when you've got it, you've just got it."