

Matthew McMahon
Age 15

Bow Hunting: A Wait That Was Worth It

The first time I was introduced to bow hunting was in Oak Ridge, Louisiana, by my good friend, Rusty. Rusty and I share many interests in the outdoors including duck hunting, duck calling, deer hunting and fishing. When he told me that we were bow hunting on a trip to Oak Ridge, I became curious and excited. I didn't really know what to expect because bow hunting was a new sport for me. That afternoon, we packed up our gear and hit the woods for an afternoon hunt. Although Rusty didn't get a show, he let me shoot his bow for the first time and I was hooked.

One year later, I found myself sitting in the same tree, except this time with my own bow and I had practiced shooting almost every day after school and all summer. I didn't see many deer that day, which was a little disappointing but not discouraging. However, the same night as my first hunt, we were practicing behind the camp and my bow broke. During the five-hour car ride home, I wondered who did this have to happen in the middle of the season. As soon as we returned to New Orleans, I was ready to go to the archery shop. Unfortunately, when I showed them the problem, they informed me it would take over a month to fix, so I was done for the season.

After nearly two months, I finally got the call that my bow was ready. I practiced nonstop, shot 3D tournaments, and had competitions with my brothers every chance I got. Needless to say, I was ready for the 2013 season.

In mid-September my dad informed me that my brothers and I had been invited to go on a hunting trip to Texas during our Christmas break with one of his lifelong hunting friends. So I practiced even more waiting for the moment of truth. Upon our arrival at the ranch, the owner said that he has a nice buck that he would like me to shoot. I knew he wouldn't want one of his trophy bucks to be wounds by an amateur bow hunter, so I wasn't upset when he handed me a .270 caliber rifle instead of my bow and said, "Good luck!" Shortly after the hunt started, I shot a 145-inch, typical ten point. Although it was a buck of a lifetime, I knew right then I'd rather be a bow hunter.

The next morning, I woke up ready to go with bow in hand and "today is the day" enthusiasm! We were hunting in a tent blind. As the sun came up, a doe gave me the perfect shot, but it was so dark inside the blind I couldn't see the sights on my bow. I didn't want to take an unsure shot, so I held off. A little later, a deer walked out to the side of the blind and gave me a 30-yard shot. My adrenaline had me shaking; but I slowly drew back as my friend turned on the video camera. I got to full draw and asked him if he was ready. When he said yes, I made what I thought was a perfect shot. I then saw my arrow sticking into a tree right behind where the deer was standing. Both of us thought I missed. Quickly, I opened another window just in time to see my deer stumble and fall over! When we played back the footage, we saw that I had actually gotten a full pass-through. Finally, all my hard work has paid off! I was a bow hunter.

The next day, I was still very excited that I had made my first archery kill! I asked my dad if I could bow hunt again and he said yes. That evening, we didn't see anything until three does came out, and I waited for one to give me a shot. When the farthest one presented a shot, I got the OK from my friend, drew back, and shot. We saw the deer turn and run off, but I used my binoculars to see that the arrow was covered in blood. We got down and started tracking the

blood trail. After only about five minutes, there she lay: a mature doe. I couldn't believe it, two bow hunts in one weekend and a trophy buck to boot. What a reward after a long wait and a lot of practice!

Since those hunts, I have left the rifle at home and bow hunted all over Louisiana in include fishing. After one trip, I heard my dad say, "Matthew could survive with only a bow." I tend to agree and am glad I live in a place like Louisiana that will allow me to do just that.