

THE WHITETAIL INSTITUTE DOES IT AGAIN... AND AGAIN

By **Bill Knight**

Photos by the Author

The 2007 bow season was very good to me. I can give the Whitetail Institute of North America much of the credit for this. I have planted Whitetail Institute products for at least the last 12 years and owe the Institute many thanks for helping me manage my father's properties for quality bucks. The products and customer service the Whitetail Institute offers are second to none. Well, anyway, let me tell you about my 2007 bow season in Iowa and Missouri.

On October 25, after an afternoon parent/teacher conference, I decided to hunt even though I'd only have about an hour on stand. I broke a few minor traffic laws on my way to my father's property, and I chose a stand set about 75 yards off an Imperial Whitetail Clover field.

As I entered the timber, I quickly realized I was too

late. Several deer were already on their way to the field and, of course, I spooked them. I kicked myself in the butt every step of the last 50 yards until I arrived at the tree stand. I settled into the stand and thought to myself, "At least it's a nice evening, and I get to watch the sunset." I was not expecting much activity after alerting all those deer. About 10 minutes before the end

of shooting light, I watched a young doe headed my way. The doe continued on her route and walked directly beneath my tree stand. When she was about 20 yards past me, I watched her come to an abrupt halt. I could tell she had spotted something.

I hoped it was a big buck and immediately caught sight of a recently familiar deer. It was a 10-pointer I had pictures of on a trail camera, and I thought he'd score about 160 inches. The big 10 lowered his head and came after the young doe, who quickly retreated back towards me. This put the big boy within bow range. I had to twist behind me to grab my bow, and I believe this mature buck spotted the movement even though I moved as stealthily as I could. The buck stopped in his tracks on high alert. I thought to myself, "It's now or never." I assumed the buck would bolt if I attempted to draw my bow but knew I might never get a better shot at this him. The buck took a split-second to glance at the young doe, and that gave me the opportunity I needed to draw my bow. I settled the pin and released. I lost sight of my arrow in the dwindling daylight but heard a solid hit. The buck ran about 15 yards and, to my amazement, just stood there. He walked a few more yards and, again, just stood there. I knew I had not made the perfect shot and quietly left the stand after dark.

The next morning at daybreak, a good friend, Mike Seay, and I took up the trail. We were soon joined by my parents. My mother found the beautiful buck not far from where we began. My mother is not a hunter, but I told her she would have to accompany me on any future deer-tracking jobs.

Well, it was October 26, (my oldest son's birthday), and I had one of the largest bucks I have ever taken with my bow (167-6/8) and a birthday party to prepare for.

On November 21, I headed for another piece of prop-



Bill Knight, holding the deer's rack, says the Whitetail Institute's products are a big reason for his success. He shot a buck with his bow that scored 167-6/8-inches and one that scored 150-inches (pictured above) using a variety of the Institute's products.



Knight says that a little effort to plant a few plots can reap big-antlered rewards like this 167-6/8-inch Pope & Young.

erty that my father and uncle own in Missouri. I helped my father and uncle put in some Imperial Clover food plots on this property about five years ago, and I shot a great buck that year with my muzzleloader as he stood in the middle of one of these fields. The buck scored in the 140s. I had not been to the property since then. However, my uncle had continued to groom his Imperial Clover plots and had enlisted my help in getting some Pure Attraction planted this year.

That evening it began to snow heavily. I love hunting on a fresh layer of snow and was really looking forward to getting out there in the morning. I had to leave the next afternoon for a Thanksgiving dinner in Iowa, but I planned to return that night and spend the rest of the week there.

I awoke Thanksgiving morning to almost three inches of fresh snow. I chose a stand close to the Pure Attraction field. I was very excited to hunt this stand with a fresh layer of snow on the ground on Thanksgiving morning. How could it get any better? The stand is set on a ridgetop above the Pure Attraction plot. Between this stand and the food plot is the side hill of the ridge, which is so thick you cannot walk through it — a deer bedding paradise and sanctuary that my uncle has made off limits to hunting. Not a bad idea if you ask me, since you could not shoot an arrow two yards through that kind of brush anyway.

At about 8:30 a.m. I glanced to my left and saw an incredible buck. He had long G2s and G3s with good width and average mass. He was about 100 yards from my stand. Then I noticed why he was there; along side him were two does that he was harassing. I did not waste any time and reached for my rattle call just as he followed the two does into the thick stuff.

I gave my best buck-fight imitation for about 10 seconds. The big boy immediately emerged from the brush and stared in my direction intently; he was trying to find the fight. He was a gorgeous buck — the biggest I had seen on this farm since I don't know when. It seemed like he stood there forever until he gave a single tail wag and committed. The big buck started trotting in my direction, and when he was about sixty yards from me, he cut back into the thick stuff, attempting to get down wind. I started to panic. If he continued on


that heading he would get downwind of me before I could get a shot.

Thank goodness he was as excited to find the fight as I was to get a shot. At about the 50-yard line he re-emerged from the brush, cut back straight toward me and started angling to cut the wind again. I had a clear shot at 45 yards. I dialed my sight-pin to the 45-yard mark, drew my bow and made a horribly poor grunt with my mouth to stop the buck. He stopped, and I released the arrow. I watched the arrow strike the big buck dead zero behind the front shoulder. The big boy wheeled around and disappeared into the heavy brush. Even though no one else was around I had to give myself a very cheerful but quiet "YEAH!!!" I knew I had just made a perfect shot on the biggest buck I ever had the opportunity to harvest in Missouri. And believe it or not, even though I grew up on this farm, this was my first buck by bow in Missouri.

To top it all off, my father and my oldest son had arrived at the old homestead, and I was able to share this excitement with them. After about one hour, my father, my uncle and a friend of mine, Loren, gathered to recover my buck. After a hard walk (and sometimes crawl) through the thick brush we found him. He was a big 9-point typical with a sticker point coming off the right G2. I could not have been more pleased. This buck just hit the 150-inch mark, but I would not have been any happier if he had been a world record.

After the high-fives, handshakes, field dressing and pictures, I was still able to make Thanksgiving dinner in Iowa.

I cannot stress enough how helpful and important Whitetail Institute products have been to my family and me in the harvesting and management of trophy bucks in Iowa and Missouri. With a little effort to plant a few food plots, the rewards are enormous. I will continue to be a loyal customer and will be passing this knowledge and loyalty on to my children.

We also saw two other bucks as big or bigger than the one I killed hanging out near the Pure Attraction field. Having so many healthy big bucks on this farm was previously unheard of. I now believe it will be the "norm." Thanks again Whitetail Institute for making quality products. 

There will be...
 anticipation.
 rain. tactics.
 strategy. mud.
 adrenaline.
 blood.



strategy.

When Stan Potts, the "Deer Decoy Guru" called and said he had some ideas that would improve our decoy so much that he would adopt it and call it "Bucky Jr.," we had to listen. We did and here he is; Bucky Jr. the Stan Potts signature model Whitetail Deer Decoy.



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