

BILL SWAN'S WILDEBEEST HUNT

Easing over the rise, George Deloch, my Namibian PH, said "There is your bull!" Looking through my Swarovski 10x50 binoculars, I saw the blue wildebeest bedded with another 20 or so of the herd milling around. George whispered "Wait until he stands and take him". After waiting for more than 15 minutes he stood at about 150 yards and one shot from my Kimber .300 WSM through the center of his neck was all it took to put him down. And then the adventure began!

Hunting the "poor man's cape buffalo", and God knows I am not a rich man; we had chased these critters all over the high desert mountains seeking a suitable trophy. We were not looking for a world record.....just something that would represent a trophy in my eyes. I had figured after watching lots of National Geographic specials, all I would have to do was hang out by the crocodiles and pick one out and shoot it with a slingshot. I have no clue where they film all that stuff but my lungs and legs knew we were not hunting there!

My wife, Vicki and I were hunting for the first time in Africa and were accompanied with our friends Keith and Kathy Watson. We had already taken Kudu, Mountain Zebra, Gemsbok, Blesbok and we were now hunting Wildebeest. I had gotten Keith interested in big game hunting and had created a monster! Keith cannot get enough of it and reads every hunting magazine available. Keith's wife, Kathy, is a veterinarian so it takes a little getting used to for her to see him harvest an animal. My wife, Vicki, does Golden Retriever Rescue work as a volunteer but I broke her in right when we were dating....if there is any such thing as breaking in a wife! I told her before we were married, "You can stop me from doing a lot of things but please don't try to stop me from hunting and fishing."

While we were on the mountain with the Wildebeest we saw smoke rising from a nearby ranch. George was worried that it would come over to his ranch and asked us if we wanted to go help try to contain the fire. After lunch he loaded his 300 gallon water tank in the back of the truck, got his trackers and off we went. Gathered at the ranch were the other landowners in the area with their trucks and water tanks. After a plan was developed we spent the rest of the day and most of the night (until 4:00 AM) lighting back fires, spraying fire breaks with water, and generally trying to contain the fire from spreading. It was a very hot and difficult task but we finally got the fire under control after it had burned about 80,000 acres. We all came home looking like trackers with the black smoke on our faces. Now the only thing that made it easier to get up after only one hour of sleep was knowing that we were going after Springbok that morning but that is another story for later.

After the Wildebeest had fallen, we whopped it up and started over for a photo opportunity however, the wildebeest had other ideas. When I arrived at the place it had dropped I saw Moses, our tracker, frantically pointing down the hill and saying something I could only interpret as trouble. To me he looked like he was getting in condition for the Olympics doing jumping jacks. Finally, I took the hint and looked

around. To my amazement, the bull was running full tilt and wanted no part of hanging on my wall. Now you have to remember that I had shot this animal through the center of the neck with a .300 WSM. In my mind's eye, this should anchor almost anything in its path including elephants and dinosaurs.....except for a Blue Wildebeest. Keith, my hunting companion, threw a 7MM projectile wildly over the back of the running beast. I raised my rifle and looked to see if anyone were in my path only to see George driving his truck down the road in my line of fire. He also had thought the bull was finished and was bringing the truck to load the trophy. I waited for an opening and sent an equally ineffective shot screaming past the bull that was about 300 yards and now approaching mach one on the ground hoping to break the land speed record. I did not know whether the sound of the muzzle blast was from my rifle or the animal breaking the sound barrier. Calmly, now that's a lie if I ever heard one, I raised the Kimber, swung on the black blur and fired what I now know was the last bullet I had in the rifle or in my pocket. To my amazement, the bull did a head over flip and was dead. I had now become an expert rifleman in everyone's eyes, except mine. I would rather be lucky than good!

We loaded the bull in the back of George's truck and headed back to camp for lunch and firefighting. Keith and Kathy left two days prior to our departure leaving Vicki and me to hunt Hartebeest and Black Wildebeest.

What a great time we had hunting with our professional hunter George Deloch thanks to the booking of the hunt which was handled through Wes Hixon's Outdoor Adventures and Travel. Every time I look at the mounted trophy of the wildebeest on the wall, I think of how the tough old beast gave it his best! That is what dreams and memories are made of.