

Chattanooga Chapter SCI Hunts for Warriors

My breathing was heavy with excitement. I took my three deep breaths for control, and on the third breath, I exhaled and held it - at the same time gradually pulling the trigger. I continued to slowly squeeze the trigger until the rifle fired the shot that would hopefully make my trip complete.

On Thursday, December 15th 2011 we left Chattanooga for Record Buck Ranch in Utopia Texas. Upon arrival in San Antonio around noon, we were greeted at the airport by the Record Buck Ranch manager Eric White. After loading all of our gear into his truck, we made the 80 mile trip to Utopia. When we arrived at the ranch we were greeted by the guides and office manager Ms. Kani. In almost no time she ensured that I had all the proper documentation so I could enjoy a once in a lifetime opportunity.

We settled into the lodge after unloading all our gear and took the rest of the evening to scout the 23,000 acre ranch. The luxurious lodging and accommodations were nothing short of spectacular, and they had everything from the best of meals to an open bar. Our itinerary was to hunt in the mornings, rest during the hot days, and continue hunting in the evening. While not hunting, we enjoyed walking around and taking in the breathtaking scenery. On Saturday, during an evening hunt, I spotted one of the biggest eight point bucks I have ever seen. After watching him for more than two hours, and while trying to calm my nerves, I waited for the perfect shot. From prior observations we knew the buck's behavior patterns which were that he, the dominate buck, would always end up closer to our blind chasing a doe. It was agonizing waiting for the perfect shot on that huge buck.

It was then I laid the barrel of my new 30-06 rife, which was donated to me by the Chattanooga Area Chapter SCI, out of the front of the blind and positioned the cross hairs on the area right behind his right shoulder. The rifle was equipped with a 3x9 Redfield scope donated by Leupold/Redfield who also furnished me with a pair of new Leupold binoculars. After the shot, the deer barely lifted his leg and then dropped with my one shot one kill. At the processing station, we scored the eight point buck at 141" and weighed him at 213lbs. It was only then I was able to quit shaking from excitement!

After my buck was harvested, we spent the rest of our time spot lighting wild hogs. If you have never tried this, you cannot believe how fast they can run. The ranch manager even allowed my brother, who was there to assist me, to harvest a management sika deer. We then departed Texas and arrived back in Chattanooga three days later safe and sound. I want to thank everyone who helped make a dream come true for an Iraqi wounded soldier. The trip was definitely *the trip of a lifetime!*

We would like to give special thanks to Chattanooga Chapter SCI, RecordBuck Ranch, Leupold / Redfield and Chapter President, Keith Watson.

Sincerely,

Rex Jones III