

BO KNOWS BUCKS!



Searching for monster whitetails, legendary athlete Bo Jackson chooses north Iowa. STORY AND PHOTOS BY LOWELL WASHBURN

When it comes to hunting, sports legend Bo Jackson can, and does, go just about anywhere in the world. Although Jackson loves to pursue waterfowl, turkey and upland birds, his greatest passion is hunting big game with bow and arrow. From elk to bear, 'gators to javelina, Bo and his bow have done it all.

Retired from professional sports, Jackson's success strategies now focus on whitetail deer rather than touchdowns or home runs. For a November deer hunt last season, Jackson considered the possibilities and chose northern Iowa.

"I'd been hearing about Iowa's giant whitetails for a long time, and the stories of those monster bucks were really getting to me," says Jackson. "I've had several invitations and have wanted to hunt deer in Iowa for more than 10 years. But last fall was the very first opportunity I'd actually had to come here. When I finally learned that I'd been fortunate enough to receive a [nonresident] deer tag, I immediately dropped everything and rearranged my schedule to come to Iowa."

Jackson's first Iowa hunt centered on the Jennison

farm near Riceville in Mitchell County. Joining him were long time friend and avid bow hunter Martin Bruder of Lakeville, Minn. and host Mark Elliott of Osage. DNR conservation officer and deer hunting expert, Ken Lonneman, volunteered as hunt coordinator.

As Jackson climbed into his tree stand the first evening, he quickly realized myths about the size of Iowa's farm country whitetails were no exaggeration. Near sunset, large numbers of deer began moving along a maze of woodland trails surrounding his stand. After watching for more than an hour, Jackson picked his target, bent the bow and harvested his first Iowa whitetail—a prime, corn-fattened doe.

Less than 200 yards down the trail, things were even better for Bruder, who carefully took aim to arrow an impressive buck during his first trip to the stand.

RIGHT: Football legend Bo Jackson waits for a glimpse of the giant Hawkeye whitetails he's heard so much about. An accomplished archer and bow hunting expert, Jackson has pursued big game across the nation. As the rut peaks this November, Jackson will return to Iowa to pursue the buck of his dreams.

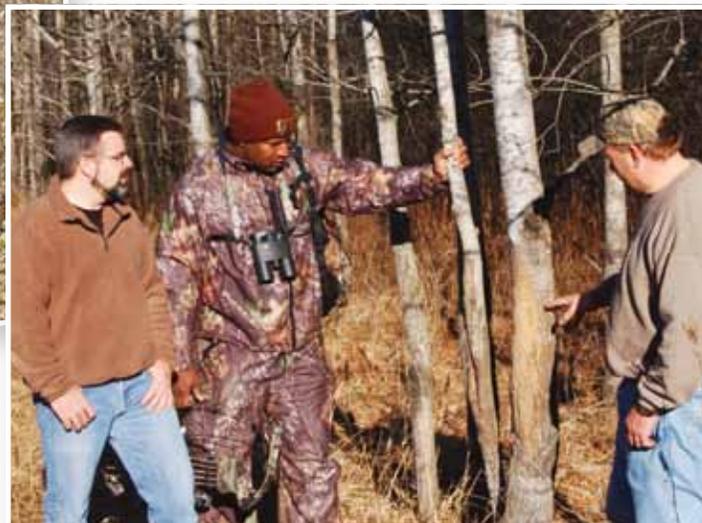
BUCK PHOTO, ABOVE, BY TY SMEDES





KEN LONNEMAN

LEFT: Martin Bruder of Lakeville, Minnesota displays a 10-point buck taken last year near Riceville while hunting with Bo Jackson. **BELOW:** Flanked by Iowa host Mark Elliott (left) and hunt coordinator Ken Lonnenman (right), legendary athlete Bo Jackson inspects a fresh buck rub on the Jennison farm, located near Riceville in Mitchell County.



“It was incredible. Martin and I each harvested a deer at about the same time during the very first day of our hunt. These deer really are giants,” he says. “I started hunting deer in my home state of Alabama during the early 1980s. I can tell you the first doe I took here in Iowa was bigger than any buck I’ve ever seen in Alabama.”

But it was Bruder’s deer that really took Jackson’s eye. A fully mature, 10-point typical, the buck green scored 150 points on the Pope & Young measuring standard.

“That deer is the kind I’ve been hearing about,” says Jackson. “I’d have to say that Martin shot the buck I came to Iowa for,” he laughs.

hunting in Iowa,” says Jackson. “It was really a great first trip and I’m very satisfied with what I’ve seen here. If I can get a tag, I plan to be back hunting deer in Iowa at this same time next year.”

Jackson did get his tag, and sometime during the peak of this season’s rut he’ll be sitting in an Iowa tree stand—watching and waiting for the buck of his dreams. 🐾

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In spite of his attraction to giant bucks, Jackson hunts as much for the table as he does for antlers. Equally proficient in the kitchen as in the woods, his home freezer is well stocked with ample stores of venison, elk, waterfowl and African ornyx.

“When on a hunt, I like to do all my own work,” says Jackson. “I don’t really like to have people do things for me. If I am fortunate enough to harvest a deer, then I think it’s my job to drag it out of the woods and process (it) myself.”

After butchering his deer, Jackson turns a portion into summer sausage and jerky. Cuts are shared with family and friends or with those less fortunate.

Although Jackson could have bagged two Iowa deer, he chose only the mature doe. He had several opportunities to shoot additional does and smaller bucks while spending three more sits in the stand. He declined, wishing to leave them for next year.

“I’ve already harvested plenty of smaller bucks,” he notes. “I decided to leave those deer in the woods and come back to see what they look like another year.

“I met some great people and had a lot of fun while

In 1985, Bo Jackson won the Heisman Trophy in the closest of all trophy votes—just 45 votes separated him and University of Iowa quarterback Chuck Long. Jackson was a powerful running back for Auburn and became one of only a handful of athletes to achieve careers in professional football and baseball. Retiring from sports in 1995, Jackson devotes his leisure time to hunting big game with bow and arrow. Currently engaged in nationwide speaking tours and private business ventures, he admits spending much less time in the outdoors than he prefers.

“One of the things I’m very involved with is a company that supplies the military with food items like bacon, beef and chicken—mainly to our troops in the Middle East,” says Jackson. Jackson has a deep seated admiration and respect for our American service men and women. He has made two visits to Kuwait and spent the last three Super Bowl weeks with U.S. troops in the Middle East.

“I try to visit at least a dozen or more bases during Super Bowl week,” says Jackson. “We just go in and sit down and really take time to visit with the troops. They are such great people and really appreciate anything you do for them. Spending time with them and looking at what’s going on over there really makes you sit back and think about all that we have at home and how many good things we take for granted.”

