

A South Texas DREAM

By: John Dean
Texas



It's early Friday morning, and a million thoughts are running through my head, over and over, of what may come over the next two days, as we drive towards the famous 74 Ranch Resort. From

my house, the 74 Ranch Resort was about four hours, so a lot of thoughts were racing through my mind while my dad and I were driving to the ranch. My dad was as excited as I was because over the years, he had never been on a hunt like this one.

Arriving at the 74 Ranch, I stood in awe of the incredible facilities, which included sporting clay range, first class meals, as well as a lodge full of exotic trophies. In all of my years of hunting, this was the most incredible place I had ever been.

I met my guide, Eric Ruiz, who had worked on the ranch for quite some time. After meeting my guide, I went to the ranch's shooting range, where I checked the accuracy of my .270 rifle, which was "dead on", I was ready to go. While sighting in my gun, I was able to meet the other two individuals who had won a hunt on the ranch. They were Justin Johnson, from the Feathered Forces Brigade, and Matthew Haeglin, from the South Texas Bobwhite Brigade.

The first hunt of the weekend was interesting because we were able to see a lot of animals, including deer, turkey, and quail which have become scarce in my area, so it was neat to see them. After leaving the stand, we drove around the 27,000 acre ranch, on the look for "the big one", in doing this we got to see what South Texas was all about. Every square inch was alive, with animals in every cactus or mesquite

tree. We went on several other hunts throughout the weekend, which were great, but my visit was coming to a close, and I hadn't been lucky enough to see the buck I wanted.

We were down to Sunday morning, the last hunt we had before checking out of the Ranch Resort. Both Justin and Matthew had already harvested their deer and now it was my turn. I was very nervous about leaving the ranch without a deer. We met Eric a 5:45A.M. ready to enter the stand. Finally after an agonizing hour, HE walked out. I took one good look at him and knew he was the one I had been waiting for. After a 70 yard shot right behind the shoulder, he ran a few yards and was down.

Upon walking up to my buck, I knew this was what South Texas was all about. This had been an opportunity of a lifetime. My buck was 41/2 year old, 180 pound (field dressed), eight point buck, scoring about 133 (Boone and Crockett), this was just a few inches short of making the Texas Trophy Hunter "Big Eight" Club.

This was an unforgettable weekend, thanks to the help and generosity of the 74 Ranch owners and staff and hard work of Buckskin Brigade Board of Directors. All my hard work and effort in promoting the South Texas Buckskin Brigade paid off with this awesome experience.

The Buckskin Brigade is a four day camp that promotes leadership and knowledge of white-tailed deer. The camp was held on the Chaparrosa Ranch in LaPrayor, Texas in June and was sponsored by Texas Parks and Wildlife as well as many other private business and individuals who are involved in managing white-tails. This year's camp will be held on the LaBandera Ranch near Carrizo Springs, June 12th through June 16th. This camp provides not only amazing learning experiences, but also ways to gain scholarships. For more information, visit www.TexasBrigades.org or contact your local county extension agency, 4-H or FFA Advisor.