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STALKING HISTORY: The story of Deric Sieck's immense non-typical is as amazing as the buck himself. And that's saying something. Here's how the world's biggest whitetail ever taken by stalking ended up with an Iowa bowhunter's tan on his rack last fall.

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Josh Hanson couldn't believe it. Moments earlier, he'd sliced a well-placed arrow into a great Iowa buck. The shot had knocked the deer down, and Josh had hurriedly nocked another arrow and delivered the coup de grace. Then the monster 178-inch buck known as "Stickers" had let out a loud grunt and had taken his final breath.

As Josh waited for his adrenaline to subside, he could see the expired buck. So he finally climbed down from his perch and" approached his trophy. Suddenly, though. Josh caught movement out of the corner of his eye. There, standing a mere 10 yards away, was a buck the likes of which he'd never seen!

The giant non-typical apparently had responded to the grunt let out by Stickers and had come to investigate the sound. Josh had just used his only tag, so he did what many of today's hunters may have done: He slowly reached into his pocket for his cell phone, pulled it out and took a photo of the monster whitetail standing there. Then he called his hunting partner, Deric Sieck.

The date was Oct. 22, 2015, and Deric was in the seat of a combine. The 36-year-old family man from Fayette, Iowa, earns his living farming crops and raising hogs on the family farm.

"Josh was pretty excited when he called," Deric says. "After he explained all that had taken place, I couldn't wait to see his deer and that photo of the bigger buck. We had a feeling there was a big buck on this farm just by the way the other deer acted, but until now we had no evidence of it. So this had us both pretty excited."

The farm in question was a 400-acre piece Josh and Deric had received permission to hunt in 2013. There was one catch, though: They could only bowhunt the property, as other groups had permission to use it during gun season.

Basing his decision on the single cell phone photo, Deric hunted the buck hard for the remainder of bow season. However, he never saw the deer, even on trail camera. Despite countless hours and miles searching the farm and neighboring properties for the sheds, Deric and Josh failed to come up with anything. It was as if the deer had completely disappeared--or, worse yet, someone else had taken him.

Deric and Josh had long ago decided to designate the east side of the property as a sanctuary, agreeing to never enter the area under any circumstance. But not knowing if the big buck was dead or alive, they decided to set a couple trail cameras within the sanctuary in mid-July 2016. They had hopes the deer was still alive, reasoning if one of that caliber had been taken the word would have leaked out. They figured the sanctuary was the most likely place to find their answer.

The men left the trail cameras in the sanctuary for about four weeks. During this time the property owner, who also farms the land, had been driving his pickup around the area and into and through the sanctuary itself. Finally, Deric and Josh, still with doubts of the buck being alive, drove their pickup directly into the center of the sanctuary to retrieve their cameras. The two were sitting in the pickup, looking through the photos, still in the center of the sanctuary, when to their surprise, a monster non-typical appeared in the photos! There was no doubt the deer was huge; however, they both had a hard time believing it was the same buck they were looking for. The deer was now far bigger than either had ever imagined him to be!

The last photo of the deer was from Aug. 20. The bowhunters immediately decided to pull the interior sanctuary cameras but leave those on the perimeter. Feeling they might have messed up already by being in the middle of the buck's safe zone, they decided to take no more chances.

Things were certainly looking up, and the two bowhunters were as excited as they'd been in over a year. But their excitement was curbed on Sept. 1. That's when the landowner decided, because of liability concerns, that he'd no longer allow any hunting from tree stands! Deric and Josh had no choice but to disturb their hunting area once again, this time only a month before archery season opened. Now they had to place several ground blinds around the hunting area. All they could do was hope they'd be able to pull off the needed changes without disturbing the buck.

Staying busy has never been a problem for Deric; having a wife and three young kids will keep a man on the move. Add in a full-time farming operation on top of family life and there's little time for hunting. To make up for some of that lost time, Deric and Josh each headed to their computers.

Google searching "How to kill a big non-typical whitetail," Deric learned a few things. "I'm an experienced hunter, but not on 280-inch deer!" he says with a laugh. Comparing notes, the men learned that old bucks get lazy and are likely to stay close to their core areas. That was solid information. They figured if one of them were to take the buck, it would be as he entered or left the sanctuary.

Archery season opened on Oct. 1. But due to family and farming commitments, it was the afternoon of Oct. 5 before Deric could hunt. It had rained a little during midday, making field entry relatively quiet. Deric and Josh had permission to cross private land to the northeast for entry into their hunting area. With the wind out of the southwest, Deric had a silent and scent-free entry to his blind, which was by a lone tree on the edge of the sanctuary. (See sidebar.)

As Deric topped a knoll, he caught sight of antlers ahead of him. The huge deer was bedded in CRP grass just outside the sanctuary! He was facing southwest and had the wind blowing into his face, and Deric was approaching from the north: a perfect setup.

But it wasn't meant to be; a young 8-pointer was bedded just five yards from the bigger deer. At a distance of 25 yards, the youngster picked up on Deric's movement and blew out of his bed, taking the giant with him. So close, yet so far!

Deric's next encounter with the buck was on the evening of Oct. 29, in a stand perfect for a north wind.

"I really enjoy hunting the end of October," he says. "The bucks are running, and rattling and calling seem to work their best at this time. About 3:30, I looked into a draw in the CRP where there's a dry pond, and I spotted the buck rubbing his antlers on a tree," Deric says. "He was directly upwind of me but out of range, so I just watched. Suddenly, he walked away and disappeared toward the north. I really had to resist the urge to call to him, but I held off."

Around 4:30 the giant buck returned, this time walking within 85 yards of Deric's ground blind. He proceeded to make a

scrape--but once more walked off to the north and disappeared!

"Again, I had to fight hard not to call to him," Deric says. "But it was still fairly early, so I figured I'd wait it out."

Around 5:50, with the light fading, Deric decided to try something different.

"I did a light rattling sequence and gave a couple low grunts," he says, "followed by a snort-wheeze. Suddenly, the buck appeared at 175 yards, and was coming in on a string!

"The buck got within 35 yards of the blind before he became nervous and decided to circle downwind, where he caught my scent and blew out of the area," Deric says. "I was devastated! To come so close and not get an opportunity was tough to handle. He took me to big-buck school that night!"

Worried about overpressuring the buck, Deric and Josh decided to leave the area alone for a couple weeks. It wasn't until Nov. 14 that Deric next hunted the area. This time he decided to bring along a decoy to hopefully draw the buck's attention.

After setting up the decoy in the same CRP draw where his last encounter had taken place, Deric climbed into his ground blind and prepared for the evening's hunt. But he hadn't even settled in when he saw the giant running away!

"The buck had been bedded nearby and had watched me the entire time," Deric says. "All I could do was watch him run away. At this point, I truly felt like giving up. I was definitely defeated!"

On Nov. 20, Josh was hunting that draw when he heard the unmistakable sound of an arrow being released. The sound had come from the neighboring property. He called Deric and told him someone had just shot the buck! The two called the neighbor, who said that, yes, he'd shot at the buck. But he'd missed.

Nov. 21 brought a southeast wind. Around 12:30 p.m., Deric entered the hunting area from the north and began slipping toward his blind, using a dry creek bed to hide his approach. Upon reaching a bend in the creek, the bow-hunter looked up to see the buck bedded only 80 yards from his blind!

"At this point there was only one thing to do, and that was to ground-stalk him," Deric says. "I picked out a tree and decided if I could get to it. I'd take the shot from there."

After a methodical stalk, Deric reached the tree with the buck still unaware of his presence. The rangefinder read 43.5 yards. Carefully nocking an arrow and drawing his bow, Deric settled in for his shot of a lifetime. And it was true, as the arrow penetrated both lungs!

The buck lunged to his feet and sped to a steep embankment choked with undergrowth. The vegetation caught in his antlers and virtually stopped him in his tracks. Not taking a chance, Deric released a second arrow at 35 yards. This one also made a direct hit to the vitals, and within seconds the buck was done.

"I didn't know what to do!" Deric says. "There were so many things I wanted to do, but the thoughts and ideas came so fast I ended up doing nothing! I eventually laid my bow down, but I just stood there for a length of time. I was utterly speechless and completely without thought. I was literally numb!"

"Eventually I started to regain some composure, and reality started to set in," he says. "I knew I'd just killed the biggest deer I would ever take, and probably ever see! This deer had mentally abused me! To have it all come together like it did, this was nothing close to how I'd thought it would happen!"

"I really took my time dragging him out by myself," Deric notes. "I tried to take full advantage of the moment and just absorb as much as I could. I knew this would never happen again, so I did everything I could to really enjoy myself."

In Iowa, it takes a huge deer to turn heads. But Deric's buck will turn heads anywhere. He has 35 measurable points sitting on a gross 206 2/8-inch 6x6 typical frame netting 200 0/8. Add the 82 2/8 inches of non-typical growth and the net Pope & Young entry score comes to an amazing 282 2/8.

This score makes Deric's deer not only the world's top bow buck of '16, but also No. 2 overall for the year. (No. 1 was Stephen Tucker's 312 0/8-inch muzzleloader buck from Tennessee, the highest-scoring whitetail ever shot by a hunter.)

The Sieck buck also could be Top 3 in P&Y. Mike Beatty's 294 0/8 from Ohio is the bow world record. Dan Coffman's 287 5/8-incher, also from Ohio, was shot two years ago. Both that deer and Deric's are eligible for panel judging in '19.)

But what's perhaps most amazing is that, in the history of whitetail hunting, no buck outscoring Deric's has been taken on a stalk. And that's for all weapons. Deric didn't plan to stalk his buck that day, but that's how it turned out.

In reviewing Deric's story, I'm reminded of a partial quote from legendary hockey coach Herb Brooks. His speech given to the 1980 U.S. Olympic team prior to playing the powerful Soviet team began with, "Great moments are born from great opportunities." I have a feeling Deric Sieck would agree!

FYI ON THE WEB

Renowned wildlife artist Larry Zach is working on a print featuring the Sieck buck. For details on Larry's whitetail prints, visit: zachwildlifeart.com.

BY DAN COLE

DERIC SIECK BUCK

Scorable points	35 (17R, 18L)	Total length	
Tip-to-tip spread	10 3/8	of abnormal	
Greatest spread	29 3/8	points:	82 2/8
Inside spread	22 6/8		

Areas Measured	Right	Left	Difference
Main Beam	26 3/8	26 3/8	--
1st point (G-1)	7 5/8	9 1/8	1 4/8
2nd point (G-2)	12 4/8	10 7/8	1 5/8
3rd point (G-3)	11 4/8	11 4/8	--
4th point (G-4)	9 2/8	8 1/8	1 1/8
5th point (G-5)	4 4/8	5 6/8	1 2/8
1st circ. (H-1)	5 1/8	5 3/8	2/8
2nd circ. (H-2)	5 0/8	5 1/8	1/8
3rd circ. (H-3)	4 5/8	4 6/8	1/8
4th circ. (H-4)	4 7/8	5 1/8	2/8
Totals	91 3/8	92 1/8	6 2/8
Gross typical score			206 2/8
Subtract side-to-side differences			-6 2/8
Add abnormal points			+ 82 2/8
FINAL NET NON-TYPICAL SCORE			282 2/8

Deric arrowed this wide, highly symmetrical non-typical in Iowa's Fayette County on Nov. 21, 2016.

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