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What is a sole? Well, in one sense, a sole is a part of a shoe, right? “Sole” can also be defined as “being the only one” or “functioning on independent power”. Finally, for me, “sole” is a word play on “soul”. These three aspects of “sole” are critical to what Sole Adventure is. -- Mark Huelsing

Reader Story – “Learning From My Mistakes” by Jordan Seitz

February 25, 2013 / 6 Comments

Today we have a great elk hunting story from Sole Adventure reader, Jordan Seitz. If you have a hunting story that you are interested in sharing, please [let me know](#).

With less than two and a half days left in my Wyoming archery elk season, I sat on a ridge in a place I called Spike Creek and reflected on the past month. A couple of nights had been spent in a wilderness bivy, I'd blown two easy shots at nice spikes – my first bow shots in the three years I'd been chasing bugles – and I had been within arm's reach of a cow and calf as they fed past me while still-hunting. Several nice bulls had tested my skills; one in particular outsmarted me several times in the Spike Creek area, and I referred him as “the bull.” Unfortunately, I'd also gotten sick enough to cancel an extended pack trip, and had learned the hard way about properly prepping arrows before fletching them.



Memories flitted through my mind as I sat, patiently glassing and listening for bugles. A bull's bugle drifted up the canyon, but before leaving my position to pursue him, I scanned my immediate surroundings one more time. I spotted a yellow blob and immediately brought my Nikons up, seeing what had to be “the bull” along with six cows and calves. The bull fed into some timber as I made a game plan. Stalking up on him from below would nearly be impossible with his cows and his open location. Calling him had previously proved futile, and I couldn't get above them unless I wanted my scent to drift right to their nostrils. Remembering a semi-active wallow in a small opening 200 yards below him, I knew it was the closest water around if he'd been in the bluffs all day. Squinting up at the bull, I determined sitting the wallow would be my best option for an encounter with him.



Decision made, I trotted across the ridge and up through the timber until I got near the wallow. Determining the elk weren't in the immediate vicinity, I snuck closer, finally stopping to sit facing away from the wallow with my back against a big pine tree. It gave me good cover, safe scent drift, and what would be a thirty yard shot at both the mud holes that were split by a small clump of trees. There was no way "the bull" could pin me down before distracting himself in the wallow. For the first hour, I sat there watching squirrels and listening to the cows and calves move through the timber about 100 yards behind me. The second hour was much quieter. As the evening wore on, and the sun began sinking, I heard a small noise behind me. Slowly peaking around the tree, my chest nearly exploded when I saw "the bull" walking through the opening towards the wallow.

“ The beast sauntered into the first mud hole and proceeded to roll in it, on his back, like a dog rolls on something rank!

I gasped for air as he stood and began flinging mud all over with his rack and hooves. When he moved behind the small clump of trees, I began creeping out on my knees from behind my tree, ready to draw. Twice, before I could get into position and before there was any way of him really seeing me, the bull stopped and glanced up at me between tree trunks. I nearly died! With almost a shrug, he ducked back down and continued to tear up turf as I readied to draw. He moved out from the clump of trees and immediately flopped down into the second mud hole, repeating his routine.



I was trembling violently as he rose and tossed more mud around, without presenting a shot. Shaking his hide, he turned broadside, directing his attention to some deadfall branches and shattering them with his rack. Staving off convulsions, I drew my Matthew's Drenalin, sinking into the "zone." His constant movements seemed to slow for a second as I settled my pin behind his shoulder and unleashed my arrow. I watched in awe as he leaped over the deadfall and bolted into the timber with a red blotch growing on his left side.

“ I heard him crashing for 100 yards and then all went silent.

If I hadn't already been on my knees, I certainly would've dropped to them! In shock that I'd just arrowed a bull, I forced myself to breathe and think about the shot. Concern that the arrow struck farther back than it should have crept into my mind. Perhaps I shook too much when I shot, or he shifted forward as I released. I've killed pronghorns at sixty yards, and wondered how I'd messed up a shot at half that distance. From the sudden stillness, I thought he might be dead from a double lung hit. However, there was another opening he may have silently entered, and a liver hit meant I risked "bumping" him and sending him into a death run. The temperatures were cool enough he could lay overnight, and as long as the resident bear didn't show up, I was certain I'd find him intact in the morning. With my scent blowing in the direction I'd last heard him, I wasted no time grabbing my gear and literally running out of there, not dawdling to look for my arrow or first blood.

Back home well after dark, my wife Brooke immediately knew something had happened and was thrilled when I showed her a picture I'd taken through my binoculars of the bull...some days she wants me to "get a big one" more than I do! A sleepless night ensued.

The sun's rays were sufficient for tracking when we slipped up to the wallow (*"of course I'm coming"* had been her response when I asked). We searched around for my arrow, and then began looking for blood. Immediately there were splotches; within thirty yards the ground looked like a war zone. The color of the blood didn't look quite right, but there was so much I was sure the hit was good. For almost 200 yards, the trail was unbelievable...until it petered out.



Tough tracking led us to a pool of blood after another 100 yards. “The bull” had stopped and begun to walk. Eventually we merged onto a game trail, painstakingly searching for single drops of blood or scuffed hoof prints. Frustration loomed until I froze, staring at a yellowish heap ahead. I spun around to Brooke with wide eyes, and she confidently exclaimed it was my elk!

I slowly walked up to “my bull” and knelt down, touching the 6x6 rack in disbelief. Post-mortem inspection proved I’d centered the liver and the rear of the right lung, imbedding the 125 grain Thunderhead in the opposite shoulder. Apparently he hadn’t been broadside like I’d thought. After some photos and skinning the skull, I began quartering and loaded our packs. The first trek to the truck was brutal. I spent most of the time questioning my sanity, but bullheadedness made me refuse to lighten my 120 pound load!





Growing up in Michigan, I never imagined I'd live in a place where "Get yer elk yet?" would be a common greeting, or that I'd ever have the opportunity to hunt one. With years of perseverance and learning from my mistakes, I finally sealed the deal on a hunt I'd dreamed so long about!

Congrats on a great elk, Jordan! Thank you for sharing your story with us.

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Name



DeerPassion

5 years ago



Awesome story and written with such vivid detail!! The accompanying photos also show the joy and the work put into a great hunt... Congrats on the beautiful bull, Jordan!!

^ v Reply



NHRedleg

5 years ago



Great story and beautiful bull; congrats!

^ v Reply



Jordan Seitz

5 years ago



Thank you! Good pictures to go with a well recorded story help me relive my hunts and get through the offseason!

^ v Reply



Al Quackenbush

5 years ago



Awesome story and bull, Jordan! Way to go! That must have been one memorable hunt. Cheers!

^ v Reply



Bev rapple

5 years ago



Great story and adventure!

^ v Reply



Donnie

4 years ago



Congrats on the bull and great story! Deciding to wait until morning definitely paid off!

^ v Reply