



JoAnn Hernberg of Drayton Valley, Alberta, has certainly climbed that ladder to great whitetail success. After tagging a huge non-typical whitetail back in 2005, she figured it would be hard to beat that big buck. Then along came the 2008 hunting season and she anchors a colossal typical whitetail. With an inside spread of over 20 inches, along with above normal mass, the score on this 6x6 started adding up real quick. JoAnn's buck ended up grossing 181 4/8.

There's a song that says, "The things you think could never happen, happen JUST LIKE THAT." Well, in the hunting world, it has happened to me twice in basically the same spot!

The first buck, now known as "Triceridrops," came along on the first day of my ladies-only whitetail camp. We had just gotten back from picking up the ladies and getting their tags. It was too late in the day to set up camp, so we decided to hunt around home. We posted the ladies on different escape routes and began to push bush. I sat on a narrow line, the last place a buck would come, or so I thought. We had help that day from my husband, Guy, and our friend Cleve Mayr. The idea was to push the bush and see what popped out.

It happens... JUST LIKE THAT

The men headed up the line to the back side of the bush. I stood there and watched them walk out of sight. After they turned south on the next line, they had only been out of sight for a couple of minutes when a buck stepped out 250 yards up the line. He stopped and looked in the direction the men had gone. I couldn't count points, but I knew he was heavy and had a drop-tine. Boom! My .284 Winchester cracked, and the deer dropped.

Now the radio started going off. "What did you shoot? Where did he go?" With the radio crackling the whole time, I couldn't relay any information. Finally, I got through, and the men turned around and came back.

We soon realized I had shot the big buck we had hunted the year before. We had no idea he was here this year. The men told me that when they had reached the spot where they were going to start their push, there were two sets of mature buck tracks. Both sets crossed the line several times, and the men were just trying to figure out which way the deer had gone when I shot one of the bucks as he was trying to sneak away from the danger. The other buck went towards one of the other ladies, but she never got a shot off. JUST LIKE THAT! What a great way to start a hunt!

I still have memories of that great hunt and many others, but things were

By JoAnn Hernberg

This photo shows the cutline that cut through the habitat where JoAnn's buck lived. The big whitetail was crossing the opening when the veteran hunter put him on the ground.



JoAnn Hernberg with the two giant whitetails she took in Alberta. The two deer were taken three years and 500 yards apart. Brian Dobson of Artistic Taxidermy out of Edmonton, Alberta, mounted the big typical. Ken Walker did the non-typical for JoAnn.



different with my second buck. I was hunting alone, and even though it was opening day of rifle season, I wasn't really into it. My girlfriend Darcy would be coming to hunt with me the following week, so I thought I would just go and sit in a stand I had set up to see what meanders by. It wasn't far from where I had shot my big buck a couple of years earlier, and though I didn't have any pictures of a monster on my trail camera, there were some shooters checking scrapes.

I climbed into the stand at about 8:00 a.m. (late, of course). As I sat there listening to the barrage of gunfire around me, I had to smile. *One shot, that's good. Two shots, oh well, maybe finishing him. Three shots! Desperation!* You would be surprised how often you hear that scenario. *Pay attention to your own hunt, JoAnn!*

Around 9:15, a doe stepped out on the line, 100 yards away. She walked up the line away from me for 50 yards, then went back into the bush on the same side she had appeared from. A minute later, she came out again with two fawns, peered over her shoulder, and crossed the line. As soon as she disappeared, I made two grunts and waited with my .300 Magnum. Ready.



Two minutes later, a huge buck stepped out 150 yards away. He was looking my way. I could see he was high, really wide, and heavy horned, but I couldn't count points. With my crosshairs on him, I desperately wished he would turn his head and give me a better look. He began to look in the direction the doe had gone, and that was all I needed – 6x6! BOOM! (Bigger gun, bigger boom!)

The buck bolted off the line. I knew I had hit him hard, but there is always that doubt in the back of your mind.

I walked up to where he had been standing and, sure enough, there was blood. I walked about five yards farther and found more blood. Thirty yards later and there he was. Now it was time to get excited. YES, YES, YES! I snapped some pictures with my cellphone and sent them to my girlfriend with a message that said, "SORRY, DARCY."

The best buck I have ever shot and I did it by myself. There were many things in 2008 that I thought would never happen, and they happened JUST LIKE THAT. Some made me sad, but my deer will always make me smile. He scores 181 4/8 with

JoAnn's 2005 non-typical whitetail.



over a 20-inch inside spread and 5 1/2-inch mass measurements that carry throughout his main beams.

I want to thank Guy for all the time he spent with me that day, helping me drag my deer out and taking pictures. It was a very good day for me. 🍷



In late August of 2008, my brother-in-law Len Polachek and I were checking out a place to set up a blind for photography. Suddenly Len spotted antlers sticking out of tall grass and weeds. I jumped out and started walking towards what I thought was one buck. At 35 yards, these two bucks exploded out of their beds, and my camera got this action shot. Garry Donald photo.