

## Doubled Up

By Jason Mears -  
Appalachian Whitetails Owner



If there is one type of hunting I enjoy as much as waterfowl hunting, it's bowhunting. Last year, I was fortunate enough to have my friend Rob, also an Appalachian Whitetails Field Team member, invite me to his uncle's farm in Ohio to hunt whitetails during the rut. I had a big buck give me the slip last year and couldn't wait for this season to roll around. The offer stood again this year and we had the dates set months in advance. It wouldn't come soon enough.

After a long few days at work, we both left early on Thursday. We wanted to get to the farm before dark and see if any large bucks were coming into the fields. During the entire trip, we kept talking about strategy and literally how awesome it would be if we both bagged a nice buck. After a few stops, we arrived at about 6:15 pm and immediately began to glass the fields for deer. It wasn't long before two does made their way into the field. I could make out another large deer following behind in the woods and glassed it. I instantly whispered to my friend, "big buck, big buck!" A large 20-inch eight-point made its way out into the field, put its nose to the ground and began following the does. Our already high expectations instantly skyrocketed.

Friday morning proved to be somewhat slow, as far as deer action. I did not see a deer and Rob had only seen a few does. We decided to meet at the farm house for lunch and come up with a new plan for the evening. On Rob's way out for lunch, he discovered a scrape above the creek bottom, which appeared to be made early in the morning. After some lunch and discussion, I decided to hunt the scrape that Rob had found earlier since I had my climbing tree stand. Rob headed in with me to show me exactly where the scrape was located. On our way to the scrape, we discovered some massive buck rubs, one of which showed tine marks at eye level, very impressive. The excitement began to build again. As we arrived at the location of the scrape, another buck had been through the area and there were now five scrapes at the same spot. I quickly got my stand on the tree, put my scent out, and was set for the evening. Rob headed to his stand across the valley.



**Appalachian Whitetails Field Team member Rob Chillinsky with his 2007 Ohio buck. He used Apparition Blind Date to bring the deer into range.**

The woods seemed to come alive after we endured some heavy rain, during the early afternoon. I saw a small buck after the rain had stopped, and then 4 does moved behind me later in the evening. Shortly after 6:00 p.m., I heard a twig snap behind me and I slowly turned my head to see what made the noise. I spotted a deer moving from my left and could see antlers on his head, but couldn't make out how big they were. He made his way toward my stand, stopping to rub a tree along the way. As he thrashed the small sapling, I grunted to him. He stopped for a moment, but then went back to working over the tree. Once more I grunted and got the same reaction. Like they say, the third time is always a charm, so after the third grunt, he made his way in my direction. I could now see that he was a nice buck. As he passed behind a split tree, I made my move to draw my bow, however, being he was on a hillside behind me; he was on

the same plane as I was and caught the movement. I just stood there, bow at full draw, hoping for just a few more steps out of him. I got my wish. He took a few more steps and stopped again. I put my sight on his chest and squeezed the release.

Unfortunately, as I let the arrow fly, the buck started to run and my arrow hit further back than I was intending. It wasn't an ideal shot at all. He ran hard for 10 yards, and then slowly walked away. I waited a few minutes and called Rob on his cell. I waited in the stand until I could see him coming and then made my way down. After a quick review of what happened, we began to look for blood. Within a few yards we found some and then began to find a decent trail that was easy to follow. The buck made his way to the field edge that was a short distance behind my stand location. I was afraid of this, as the blood trail would be almost impossible to find in the wet blades of grass. We decided to stop here, knowing it was not a good shot and not wanting to push the deer. To make matters worse, it was beginning to rain. It quickly washed away my hopes of finding the buck. I did not have a good feeling at all, but as I've learned in the past, you never give up.

Rob's original intentions were to help me look for my buck in the morning, but I told him to go out for a few hours and then give me a hand tracking, as it wasn't like we could hunt there everyday. It's a good thing he did, as twenty minutes after first light Rob had the wide eight-point we had seen earlier in the hunt come within eight yards of his stand. He put an excellent shot on the buck and it went 15 yards before going down. I was getting ready, putting my vest on to begin my day when I got the call. I couldn't have been happier for him, although I was still pretty bummed out about my own situation.

Rob had met up with me a short while later and our thoughts were that my buck had crossed the field and went into a very thick creek bottom. It was what we had seen deer do before and it made the most sense. However, you can never rule out any possibility. I had planned to search the entire farm if that's what it took. Rob and I searched the thick creek bottom multiple times back and forth and with every step, I think I became more disgusted. The last thing that any ethical hunter wants to do is lose an animal and have it go to waste. I kept thinking, if it only hadn't rained.

It was now 12:30 p.m., and as we searched through a thick knoll above the bottom, I popped out into the field. We had talked earlier about the possibility of the buck heading left along the field edge instead of directly across the field. I made the decision to head to the field stand, which is the stand I hunted from on Friday morning. Behind the field stand is a very small meandering creek bottom, a good place for a deer to hide. I made my way through the thicket along the creek, finding a scrape along the way. After going about 50 yards beyond the scrape, I reached the end of the bottom. I turned around and headed back through. As I got to where I thought the scrape was I stopped and scanned the woods to note its location. As I looked to my left, there he was! Approaching from this direction let me see into the bottom. Again, I couldn't believe it, there he was! I wish I could have seen the expression on my face. He was larger than I expected. It was pure excitement.



**The author poses with his Ohio trophy. Apparition Dead Red did the trick for Jason on this hunt.**

I quickly made my way across the field and met up with Rob. We both began smiling from ear to ear. Things changed so quickly as there was now laughter, excitement, and mainly just relief we had found the deer. Persistence had paid off!

Later in the day, we sat back and took it all in. We had done what we talked about, we doubled up. I was extremely lucky to recover my deer and Rob put an excellent shot on his. We were both fortunate enough to take two very nice bucks over the weekend. It's strange how things work out sometimes. We never thought on Thursday as we watched the wide eight-point that he would be coming home with us, we only hoped. We can't wait until next year, and until then, I'm sure we'll both be replaying this weekend over and over in our heads.