

Crossbow Enables Spataro To Take Wisconsin Record

By Mark LaBarbera



Jimmy Spataro just wanted to relax November 15, not shoot one of Wisconsin's largest whitetail deer of all-time or become an inspiration to handicapped hunters worldwide.

Caring for his wife Linda after her near-death experience was keeping him busier than usual. A brain aneurysm burst in Linda's head October 17. Fortunately, Jimmy was home when it happened.

"She had stopped breathing," said Jimmy. He responded quickly, slapping her on the back, which started her breathing again. He dialed 911.

"She had a miraculous recovery," said Jimmy, teary-eyed. The bleeding in Linda's brain did not permanently impair her. But as she recovered, the doctor prescribed medication and twice-daily naps.

Jimmy was already suffering from fibromyalgia, a disease

that forced him to give up one of his passions, golf, about four years ago.

He looked for a substitute, a life-long sport that he could enjoy outdoors, alone or with friends; something that could be rewarding, yet always offer new challenges and levels of greater proficiency.

So it's probably no surprise that he embraced friend Michael Enea's recommendation to try bowhunting, but Jimmy did not have the strength to draw and hold the minimum required bow weight. So Enea and Steve Pagel hooked him up with a state-of-the-art TenPoint crossbow. Jimmy's debilitating disease qualified him for a crossbow permit. Par for the course, he dedicated himself to bowhunting the same way he began his mastery of golf.

Soon he harvested his first deer, a doe, on Columbus Day, 2007, that filled his freezer and helped feed a few elderly friends.



New seasons, more does, but he did not shoot a buck until 2010.

“If not for deer hunting with a crossbow, I wouldn’t be getting outdoors in my late 60’s and enjoying it as much as I do now,” said Jimmy, who was 67 when he shot the buck.

November 15 was one of those days when Linda was feeling better and getting ready for her afternoon nap, and Mr. S. was feeling good enough to spend a couple of hours hunting.

Paying attention to wind direction and where he wanted it to carry the scent, he partially dipped another of his strategically placed key wicks in Special Golden Estrus, and then uncased his bow, tied it to a safety rope, climbed the stand and pulled up the bow.

Immediately, he began to feel the effects of his fibromyalgia. But he softly rattled and grunted, and waited.

Nothing. He rested, waiting, alert, but trying to relax.

He contemplated the idea of packing up and going home to check on Linda.

Before an hour passed, he blew his Primos grunt call again, and shook the Knight & Hale rattle bag.

Again, nothing.

It was getting cloudier. Jimmy again considered leaving.

“But just then, a big buck came over a little ridge about 30 yards away, nose in the air,” Jimmy recalled. “I knew immediately that he was a shooter. High rack, lots of antler points. Bigger than anything I’ve ever seen within bow range. My heart began pounding. I remember breathing rapidly.”

Jimmy began to stand up, but the buck was so close.

Three-quarters standing, Jimmy froze. Not fully standing, not comfortably sitting, he was in an awkward position. The crossbow began to feel heavier, as his ailing nerves and muscles battled his will to succeed.

“My fibromyalgia had me worried about whether I could hold still, let alone make the shot if I got a good one,” he said.

The buck walked behind some trees and looked back over its shoulder.

Jimmy stood erect as the monster whitetail stepped into the only opening.

“I fired. I heard it hit him, hard,” Jimmy recalled.

The buck ran off, and Jimmy shook with excitement.

He called friends who helped him find the deer nearby and drag it out.

After the 60-day drying period, the antlers were scored by a panel of measurers who were not unanimous on how to score two tines with a common base. They submitted to Boone & Crockett a score of 210-5/8 gross and 179-1/8 net, the largest ever recorded from Waukesha County and ninth largest typical whitetail in Wisconsin. It is the largest Wisconsin typical whitetail taken with a crossbow, according to scorer Brian Tessman.

Linda said that she and her husband have already enjoyed great meals from this buck’s venison, so it doesn’t really matter to them where the record keepers place the Spataro whitetail.

Wrapping up his story, Jimmy said he just hopes that other people with disabilities will be inspired to pick up the crossbow and spend time afield.