

Josh's Mentor Hunt

by Matt Schlueter



While out with my son Josh, trying to find a doe for his Mentor Deer tag, I began thinking about why gun safety is so important. Forgetting to observe any of the rules of gun safety could lead to life altering event, injury or even worse. The most honest gauge of a person's safe gun handling skills can be observed while they are hunting in the field.

During one of our trips, we had received a good tip from a friend about some does in a shelter belt. The grove was their home and they stayed close to it making it a good opportunity.

We arrived at the shelter belt it was just as it had been described. We found a huge Cottonwood tree along the trail that the deer had been using, the tree was wide enough that we could both sit side by side while leaning against it. I set up shooting sticks so Josh would have a nice rest to aim from, and we began to wait. While waiting Josh and I were quietly talking about what to expect. We talked about how to listen to all the different sounds and even being able to hear the deer before we were able to see them on the path. While we were waiting we could hear birds, squirrels, and the wind moving through the trees.

At one point Josh told me he thought it was raining. I looked at him and then up at the sky and saw the sunlight filtering through the trees. I asked him why he thought it was raining and he pointed to some wet spots on his hunting vest. I had to break the news to Josh he was not being rain drops but bird droppings... I have got to love my son because without blinking, he simply stated "well it's a good thing I have a hat on".

Finally we had a doe coming toward us but she did not follow the trail. Evidently she did not get the memo about deer using deer paths; instead she came up from behind us. We were fortunate enough to get some warning that she was coming when we heard her walking through the underbrush.

Once Josh got moved so he could look around the tree, he started to line up on the deer. Josh did not shoot and eventually the doe moved back into the trees. Josh later told me he could only see her tail, while he was trying to line up where he should aim, she took off and he still did not have a shot. I was impressed with my son's explanation, and told him if he was unsure of his target then it was best to pass up on the shot.

Several days later we were back at the same grove. After hunting all morning and not seeing anything, we decided to go back to the pickup. While walking along the fence line a deer jumped up and into the grove to hide. Josh spotted the deer when it moved the second time, as he looked he realized it was a small buck. Once again fate would have it even though he had a clear shot this time he had to pass it up since he only has an antlerless deer tag.

Lessons Learned:

Mentor hunting is the best opportunity to reinforce the four basic rules of gun safety in a young hunter's mindset during hunting. From putting your guns and gear into your vehicle and leaving home, exiting the vehicle, to hunting in the field, and returning home.

As a mentor you can praise good habits, along with providing instruction on proper gun handling skills as they relate to



the four basic rules of gun safety. There are many variations of the basic gun safety rules, the four basic rules introduced by Colonel Jeff Cooper are listed below:

1. All guns are always loaded.
2. Never let the muzzle cover anything you are not willing to destroy.
3. Keep your finger off the trigger until your sights are on the target.
4. Be sure of your target and what is beyond it.

Keep watching for more on Josh's Mentor Hunting Deer Season. ■

Matt Schlueter is a retired Deputy Sheriff from the Lake County Sheriff's Office, located in South Dakota with over 19 years of combined experience in corrections and law enforcement, and held the position of Firearms Instructor and DARE officer with the Lake County Sheriff's Office till his retirement. He is also a NRA Certified Pistol Instructor, and owner/chief instructor of Schlueter Firearms Instruction. Matt's goal is to provide the best information possible for those who share his interest in shooting firearms. Matt's goals also include providing the best training courses possible for students who attended courses he is offering. For those wishing to contact me please visit my website at \t "_blank" www.learnntwoshoot.com, or you can join me on Facebook at \t "_blank" www.facebook.com/SchlueterFirearmsInstruction. I enjoy readers who contacting me with comments, questions, or suggestions.

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