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JOEY TANTARDINO'S

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BULL

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OPTICS PAST, PRESENT & FUTURE

THE LLAMA REPORT:
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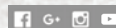
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Eastmans' Hunting Journal (ISSN 1524-3168) is published bimonthly for \$29.99 per year or \$59.99 for two years by Eastmans' Hunting Journal, 661 Wyoming Ave., Powell, WY 82435. Periodicals Postage Paid at U.S. Post Office in Powell, WY with additional mailing offices. Copyright © 2017 Eastmans' Hunting Journal. All rights reserved. Postmaster: Send address changes to Eastmans' Hunting Journal, P.O. Box 798, Powell, WY 82435.

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PUBLISHED SINCE 1987



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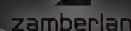
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MY DIY

PERFECT

This hunt was the culmination of perfect timing that led this fine young man Joey Tantardino and his dad, Joe Tantardino to us. My wife Shelley and I own and operate SC2 Outdoors in northern California where we lease and handle the wildlife management on a couple of private ranches. One is located in the Northeastern California Elk Zone and it is perfect habitat for the Rocky Mountain elk.

The zone is massive, and with only 10 archery, 15 rifle, and 2 apprentice tags, it affords the bulls in the unit space to get old and exploit their great genetics. The demand for these tags is high and the draw odds are astronomical. At 14, Joey beat the odds on his first attempt and pulled a 411 apprentice tag, a 491 to 1 chance.

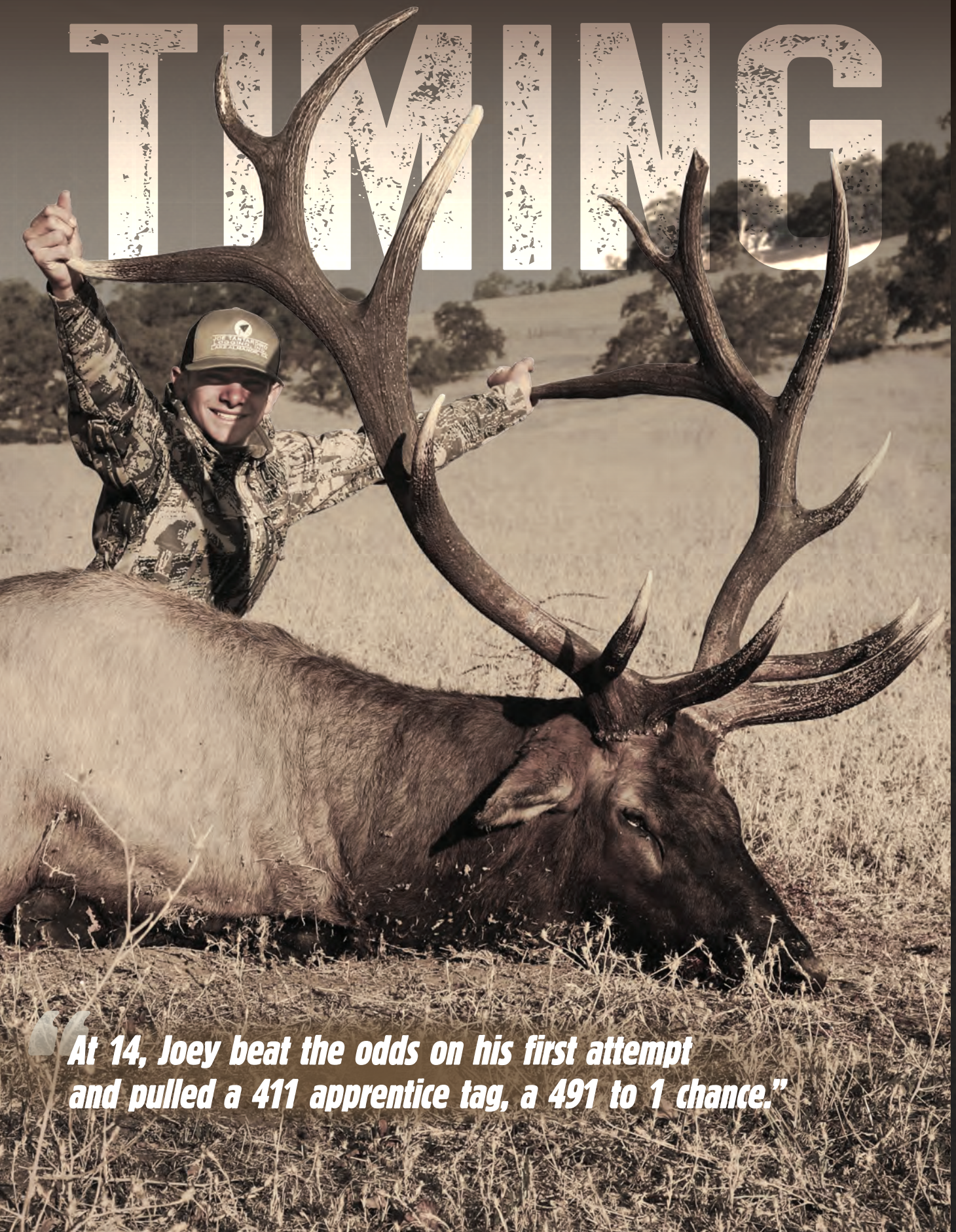
We were in full swing of preparing for our fall schedule. The draw results

were posted and we were fielding calls from hunters for deer, elk and antelope but we still didn't have a rifle hunter for this premium elk hunt. In California, the Department of Fish and Wildlife will not produce a list to registered guides or outfitters of successful applicants, so for the northeastern elk hunts we were trying to find 27 people out of 39 million.

Our landowners, the Rickert family,



TWING



At 14, Joey beat the odds on his first attempt and pulled a 411 apprentice tag, a 491 to 1 chance."

have always been vested in bettering our community and schools. So, when I approached them about donating a hunt on the ranch for 2018 to a junior hunter, they were all in with us. August 10th began our social media search to find either of the two apprentice tag holders.

We were getting information from government employees, biologists, and wardens wanting to make sure we were in contact with these kids. Social media is an amazing thing. It didn't take long for us to locate both tag holders. It was apparent that the girl was in good hands. We then got that call from Joey's father, who of course was skeptical, but he had gotten our information through wardens that he knew, so he decided to contact us on August 14th. Perfect timing.

Joe is a PG&E contractor and had been extremely busy with the Carr fire that devastated the Redding area and so he did not have time to scout. He was super-excited but still skeptical. I did my best to convince him that our offer was legit.

As the season approached, Shelley and I scouted and checked our trail cameras a couple times a week and got some great intel from the archery hunt just days before Joey's hunt. We shared pictures of the numerous bulls that were showing up. I was confident that with a little cooperation of the elk and the extra advantage of the rifle, we could put Joey on a mature 6-point bull. That would be our goal.

We had finished our archery hunt on Sunday, our tails tucked

a little because the elk had been unresponsive to calls and swirling winds had busted our most promising opportunities. The rut had yet to get going but we had a lot of elk and several great bulls. On Tuesday night, the Tantardinos rolled into town and I met them at their hotel to go over the logistics and the obligatory paperwork, excited about what the morning would offer.

We picked them up at 4:15 a.m. and headed east to the ranch. Our plan was to get on the north ridge and listen for elk in the fields below. As we sat in the darkness in the oaks and dry grass rangeland, the bulls bugled in the fields below and in both canyons heading east. As civil twilight began, we took position on a high point overlooking the fields. We had a herd of cows and calves below and elk were slowly exiting the creek. We had a small six and a big six moving about the herd below and to the east of us. Shelley had spotted a great bull laying down in the middle of the herd, fully protected in his current position.

The winds were still, so Joey and I moved back while Joe and Shelley watched from our vantage point. We dropped down behind the ridge and took a small seasonal creek drainage for cover and then popped up on a herd moving east, and in it was our man. This bull had moved down about September 2nd and now he was running the show. On August 17th this bull was about 12 miles away, now he was 167 yards



away, glunking and keeping an eye on the other bulls that were bugling and trying to peel a couple cows from his harem. Perfect timing.

Because of this, Joey and I were able to get the Bog Pod set up, talk about the shot and wait for cows to clear and for him to turn broadside. Once he did, I could hardly get "go ahead" out of my mouth before the report of the rifle and the bull hit the ground. Joey's grandfather had passed away in June and Joey was using his grandfather's pre-WWII Winchester Model 70 in .30-06, it doesn't get much

GEAR LIST

Firearm Winchester Model 70 Pre-'64 .30-06 (Grandpa's Gun) | **Scope** Leupold | **Ammo** Hornady Precision Hunter 178 grain | **Binoculars** Swarovski EL 12x50, Leica Geovid 10x42 | **Clothing** KUIU, Sitka | **Boots** Lathrop & Son | **Pack** KUIU Icon Pro | **GPS** Garmin Oregon | **Shooting sticks** Bog Pod | **Game calls** Carlton

OUTFITTER INFO:

SC2 Outdoors
www.sc2outdoors.com
(530) 999-8003

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Joey is a 14-year-old freshman who attends Chester High School. He is an avid fisherman who designs and builds his own jigs. He loves to spend time outdoors.

Gear Giveaway
see page 4.



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better than that.

After a quick hug, high five and congratulatory dance, It didn't take Shelley and Joe long to work their way down to us, and after a brief recap we approached the bull. I had seen this bull on numerous occasions and I couldn't wait to admire the mass he possessed; he was truly magnificent. I think we spent a good 45 minutes just talking, laughing and being awestruck. Then I called one of the owners, the ranch foreman, one of our local CDFW biologists and my daughter. It wasn't long before everyone was out to help and get a look at this great bull.

Unofficially, he scored 420" gross and 398 6/8" net, Boone and Crockett. He has 59" and 54" beams and 74" of mass. I hope he has etched a memory in Joey's mind that he and his dad will share forever.



One shot with his grandpa's old rifle anchored the bull perfectly.



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