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HUNTING THE GREAT CONTINENT OF AFRICA

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Cape Buffalo

A long-sought-after bowhunting encounter

By Frank Berbuir

I had a dream. And I traveled for my long-sought-after hunting dream for Cape buffalo with bow and arrow – I was happy to be back to Africa again.

Although all my bowhunting trips so far were challenging and rewarding, this one would be even more special, with outfitter and PH Izak Vos from Vos Safaris. I knew Izak from former hunts in Mozambique and South Africa where we became close friends – an excellent and highly experienced professional hunter for dangerous game, especially buffalo and elephant, as well for all other game.

It was an early and chilly Saturday morning in August 2012 in South Africa when we stepped out of our Ford Ranger “bakkie” (pick-up truck). We were in the Limpopo Province in the northern part of South Africa close to Thabazimbi. “We” meant just three guys – my PH Izak, Johan Du Preez the PH handling my video camera during the hunt, and myself. We were welcomed by Marius the landowner and his son, and after some practice shots with my 90 lbs Elite GT 500 bow and 800-grain arrow with the Muzzy Phantom broadhead on our practice shooting-butt, we headed out.

We had previously scouted the area on advice from Marius, so knew where to find the spots where the buffalos commonly roam on his huge property, especially in the early-morning hours. We had spotted a small bachelor herd with some impressive bulls we wanted to stalk and hunt this morning.

During the drive in the bushveld, I could feel rising excitement. We left the car behind some thick brush and walked and stalked about three kilometres until we came closer to where we’d spotted the buffs before. From the direction of their dust cloud, we could check with the binoculars where the herd was heading, and with the wind fortunately in our faces, we sneaked slowly forward and moved behind some bushes to wait in ambush. It took quite a while before the first buffalo became visible for us.

“Holy smoke, this animal is huge!” I thought, when I looked at it through the binoculars. The leader of the pack was approximately 50 metres to our right, and came closer. “Stay calm,” Izak whispered. “This is just a young bull in front – the bigger and older ones will come at the end of the troop.”

Wow! My blood pressure was rising like a high-level race car engine when the crowd of wild buffalo roamed in front of us, and our sparse cover was just bushes! Easily they could run us over! From time to time one or another buffalo was facing our direction, but the wind was good and in our favor, although it sometimes swirled a bit – but the buffalos luckily did not realize that we were close.

It started to be extra thrilling when one soft-bossed younger bull came, very interested, directly closer towards us,





Bowhunting: South Africa: 2012

snorting and sniffing to find out what might be behind the bushes.

I got really a bit concerned when he still moved forward, and I saw Izak putting the securing lever of his .458 Lott rifle on unsafe and slowly starting to lift his gun. Fortunately, the bull lost interest, and turned around when he was at ten metres from us. "Holy cow!" I thought. "That was exciting, and grueling!"

Then "the Boss" approached, more or less the last one to join the squad which grazed calmly on some grass. "Son of a gun, this is

an awesome bruiser of a buffalo," was my first thought when I saw him.

He was big, *really* big, with a tremendous body size, hard boss and set of horns, and he looked mean and awkward. Robert Ruark's dramatic and often-quoted description of a Cape buffalo's stare became real for me: "They look at you as if you owe them money." *In this case, lots of money.* A moment in your life you can hardly describe, unless this moment is right in front of you, and you will probably never forget it.

This buff had made his position as the big

shot clear to the others. Each buddy that came up close and personal got hit by his horns or boss, which sounded very imposing, like smashing a heavy sledgehammer on an anvil. What a magnificent spectacle.

Meanwhile, about 20 buffalo were in front of us, and I was in a kneeling position with a comfortable shooting window when "my buffalo" stood free and nicely broadside. I used my Nikon Rangefinder to locate him at 25 metres (27 yards). Izak looked at me and just nodded his head and put his thumb up: "Frank, do it – now!"

Luckily, I'd calmed down during the whole exciting scenario and was ready for the moment of truth. I had practiced a lot

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with my bow set up and had studied their anatomy as well. At a snail's pace I lifted my bow with the arrow nocked in, grabbed the Gripwerks quilted maple grip and drew slowly up to a full draw.

Maybe because of my high adrenaline level, it felt easy to pull the 90 pounds of the bow in that situation. The pin of the Spot-Hogg sight was facing exactly on his vital area. By a light touch with my index finger on the trigger of my Scott release, the Easton Full Metal Jacket Dangerous Game arrow went off and silently flew to its mark with a cracking noise on impact. My first impression was that I made a good shot. Izak smiled at me, put his thumbs up again, and whispered: "It was a brilliant shot, directly behind the shoulder."

Mortally wounded by the Muzzy Phantom SS 2-blade broadhead, the buff jumped up, turned around and we could see that the arrow stuck out on the other side – so it penetrated completely through the massive chest cavity of this brute.

It was so amazing to see that. He stomped about twenty metres, stopped, turned back to see what had happened, and lay down.

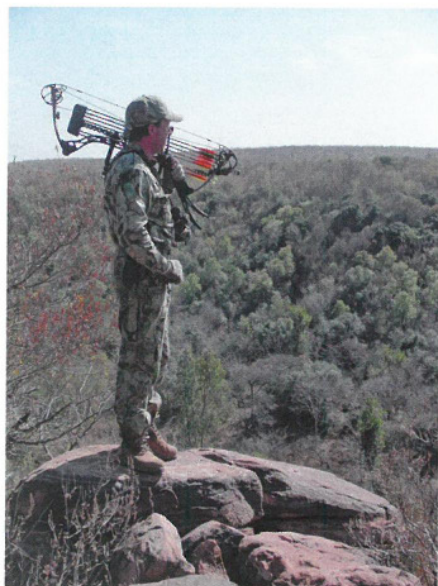
We did not move. Izak told us silently to be quiet and calm to give him time, because all the other buffalos were still there and just



Spectacular rock overview of the beautiful landscape in the Limpopo Province.



A perfectly happy hunter and PH with their magnificent Cape buffalo bull.



Just soaking up the once-only spirit of this place.

looked up when their comrade ran away. After a short while – which felt like eternity – we heard his death bellow and saw all the other buffalos rushing to their companion, a picture I will never forget.

He was dead now. No additional bullet from the rifle was necessary.

We radioed the landowner, and when he came with the bakkie he shot three times in the air so that the remaining buffalos backed off and we could take some great trophy photos and load this stunning buffalo. He was a mature bull with exceptional horns that would easily qualify him for a Record Book. You can never really appreciate the enormous size of these magnificent animals until you get up close to them.

It was interesting to see how the 800 kg (1764 lbs) animal was loaded within three minutes onto the bed of the vehicle. The slaughtering gave 375 Kg (827 lbs) of meat and a beautiful trophy.

The spread of my buffalo officially measured 41½" – wow, that was impressive as well – and it was an outstanding trophy. It had everything a buffalo should have – a big, hard boss, nice dropped curls, and a wide spread.

Some days later I also shot a nice big common waterbuck, a Limpopo bushbuck, and a big feral boar. It was a great trip and hunt with a great PH and friend, a perfect organization and, with serious and well-planned training and preparation and great equipment, it paid off perfectly. The Elite GT 500 bow with the Easton Full Metal Jacket 250 Dangerous Game arrow and the Muzzy Phantom SS 200-grain broadhead



Rough South African wintertime bushveld under a clear, blue sky.

with a total arrow weight of 800-grain performed and penetrated excellently on all animals. It was an amazing experience and will be a memory for a lifetime.

Once again, thank you very much to Izak Vos from Vos Safaris and his entire nice family for his friendship and this great hunt.

Always good hunting, "Waidmannsheil", "shoot straight", and "alles van die beste!"

Frank, an automotive mechanical engineer and avid bowhunter living in Germany, is passionate about the outdoors and hunting, starting as a young boy with a self-made primitive hazelnut bow. He progressed to a modern compound bow after a visit to the USA. He has to travel for his passion, as bow and arrow is prohibited in Germany. Frank has bowhunted in several countries in Europe, the USA, Mauritius, and has become addicted to hunting Africa. 🦒

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