

To some hunting is a weekend adventure; something you do to pass the cold winter months. To others, it is a passion, maybe a lifestyle. To me, Zane Foust and to many others like me, it was always an escape. It was an escape to a place that I loved, to get away from the hospital and the doctor's office. My father Dave and I have hunted my entire life. Whether it was deer, ducks, or turkeys, I had always used hunting as my inspiration in life, to keep going; keep fighting.

At a young age I was diagnosed with Addison's disease, polycystic kidney disease, and a pituitary tumor. I struggled with near death experiences, hard days and weeks affected my entire childhood and adolescent life, but hunting was always there to escape to. There wasn't a time in my life, no matter how bad my health became, that I wasn't begging my dad to go hunting and there wasn't a time in my life when hunting didn't make it all disappear for a short time.

I met Frank Maestri and his family through an Outdoor Dream Foundation mule deer hunt in Wyoming. Throughout the hunt, Frank and I began to talk about sheep hunting and how it was an ultimate dream and goal of mine. As we talked, I remember Frank telling me, "You're going to go on a sheep hunt, Zane!" Two years later, Frank, my dad, and I were doing exactly that.

Packing lists and workout routines went out the window the minute we stepped on the float plane out of Whitehorse, Yukon. We flew into camp, met everyone, got settled into camp, and mentally prepared for the hunt. The next day, we loaded up the horses and headed out to find the sheep I had dreamt so much about. I could not believe that it was actually happening- I was hunting wild sheep, with some of the greatest people I know.

As we approached the mountain, we found a band of rams with a few ewes and lambs. "A couple good rams in there," said our guide Nate Olson. We made a game plan and tied the horses up to some cedar trees in the basin. 3,000 vertical feet and a couple miles later, we were on top of the mountain breathing hard and happy as could be. The rams spooked the next ridge; however, we were in heaven-in the Yukon chasing wild Dall sheep.

The next day, we made another laborious hike to a band of rams on another mountain. After many stops along the way and a few changes of socks, we found ourselves eighty yards from a group of great, full curl rams. We decided that the rams were not to the age limit that we were looking for. Although disappointed with the situation, no one could be down for too long. We found ourselves again, in a laughing fest on the side of the mountain, with sack lunches and blistered feet, ready for the next trudge up the mountain.

Day three, we decided to take camp on our back and make a different play on the rams we had been seeing each day from right outside camp. It seemed that they remained in a general area every morning before the sun crested and reached them in their beds. We decided to take a day off horseback and hike to get to a spot that we could set up and camp for the night, in anticipation that we would end up right where the sheep wanted to be when we awoke the following morning. After another long day of hiking through tundra hummocks and boulders, we ended up chasing a band of rams all the way around the mountain, finally setting up for a shot. We sat for an hour contemplating the ethicality of the shot and decided, due to the number of rams and the distance, that we should call it a night and hope that the next day would be the day.

The following morning, we awoke crammed into tents, with frost on our sleeping bags. It was a crisp, clear morning, that felt perfect to be hunting. We hiked to our glassing point and didn't find the rams we were expecting. We hiked all the way around the edge of the mountain that we had expected the rams to be on, and never found them. We took a break on the edge of a cliff and ate a snack. We talked possibilities, past hunts, and good times, when all of a sudden Nate whispered, "Get down!" Behind us, cresting the ridge about 700 yards away, was the band of rams we had found the previous night. We belly crawled to a hidden position and discussed the game plan. After a stalk around the valley we were in a slow creep up the mountain, we were finally laying in a boulder field, with eyes and rifle scope aimed at a band of rams. Minutes seemed like eternity and finally the ram we had been targeting

cleared from the group, and Nate gave me the green light. The bullet connected, and we ran down the mountain chasing the sheep with binoculars in hand, finally hearing Frank say the best words I have ever heard, "There he is, right there, he's down for sure!"

As I look back on the hunt now, it was more than a hunt. It was one of the greatest experiences of my life. Just like Jack O'Conner said, "There is no half way. After his first exposure, a man is either a sheep hunter or he isn't. He either falls under the spell of sheep hunting and sheep country or he won't be caught dead on another sheep mountain." I am so glad to say that I fell completely under that spell. I am already dreaming of another hunt to chase wild sheep. Sheep hunting gave me inspiration that I can do anything, no matter what I've been through. Sheep hunting proved to me that no matter how many times I have been told "no you shouldn't," or "no you can't," that I can, and I will!

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