



# A roebuck TO REMEMBER



Mo Virtue follows her husband's client for a 40th birthday roebuck to remember

*While Scotland is better known for red deer, it offers excellent roe stalking too*



Stalking through the wood, Laurie could not help but think of the possibilities the morning could unveil: it was the end of July, 5.30am and the middle of the roe rut. It was great to be out and Laurie was completely unaware that today was to be his red-letter day.

He was stalking in the Scottish borders with David Virtue of DV Sporting, nothing unusual in that. He had been visiting happily for many years roe stalking and goose shooting, but this year was a special year as it was his 40th birthday. He was looking for something a little bit special.

"Look over there Laurie," David whispered, dispelling Laurie's daydreams and bringing him back to reality. Spying through the thick undergrowth they both glimpsed a large buck trotting through the trees. It was approximately 90 yards away and in hot pursuit of a doe, but from his angle they could not see if it was a good head. They had seen a few good bucks on our other outings but Laurie was after a medal on this occasion. David's years of experience came to the fore as he whispered "that's the one we'll go for, he's a good one. It'll be a bit tricky though, they don't get to that class by being easy." The buck obviously agreed, he was waiting for no-one and soon disappeared back into the thick woodland.

Oh well, that's just the way it goes – probably wouldn't see the buck again. Laurie

was disappointed that he had gone so quickly; all the other bucks they'd spotted were not of medal quality. However, with 20 years of roe stalking experience behind him, he had learnt a thing or two – the most important being that chances like these were few and far between. He had really been lucky to see a buck of that quality at all.

David took Laurie further on to an area where he had previously seen a different trophy buck. This one was also proving elusive so David soon decided that they would go back to the original area and have another crack at the medal buck. After carefully stalking their way through the thick undergrowth for a while, occasionally pausing to listen out for any tell-tale sounds of the animal, David stopped and whispered "look over there." In the distance Laurie saw another buck and looked up expectantly. "No," David sighed, "He won't do – he will be a good one in a few years though."

Laurie knew David well and he trusted his judgment, and in 20 years of roe stalking and having shot in excess of 200 deer he had yet to be lucky enough to shoot a medal head. This was his 40th birthday, so it had to be special.

This outing was the second of three stalks he had booked with David, two evening and one morning. He had been out the previous evening with him and seen a few smaller

## Laurie's Kit:

**Rifle** Blaser .308

**Binoculars** Leica Geovids

**Scope** Swarovski 3-12x50

beasts, but had returned to the shooting lodge empty-handed. After this morning he only had one more chance in the evening before heading for home. "Right," David said, "there's a clearing about five minutes up ahead. I've a high seat set up there, it is not a place that I would usually shoot from at this time of the year as the cover is so high, but this is the buck's playground and I think our best chance is to go up there and sit tight and I'll see if I can call him in. The clearing is tiny but with a bit of skill and a lot of luck you never know!"

A few minutes later they were in the clearing and soon settled into the high seat. David squeezed the Buttolo call, paused and then called again. Laurie waited in the silence and then an almighty crashing came towards them through the trees. Laurie sat quietly in anticipation, heart hammering loudly in his chest, totally amazed at the immediate response. A buck appeared through the thicket and he got the shock of his life. He had come right into the base of the high seat and was too close to shoot. He also couldn't see if he was the medal buck that they were after earlier. He looked toward David, who mouthed the words silently: "Wait and let him move away." Trusting in David's experience, he did as instructed and hoped the buck would move as expected. His mind began to race, was this actually the buck they had seen previously, bolting off in pursuit of his doe?

The buck began to move off in the cover towards the direction of the trees. As he got to the edge of the clearing he paused momentarily, probably waiting for his doe to call, and that moment was the opportunity Laurie had waited 20 years for. The buck was standing broadside, clear of the cover, and obviously carried a heavy head. Laurie steadied the Blaser rifle, caught his breath, and took up the trigger. Oblivious to the jolt as the bullet was released, the buck leaped and dropped almost straight away. Laurie re-loaded, and waited, adrenaline pumping for what felt like a lifetime to see if the buck would get up, but it had been a good clean shot. He remained lifeless so the two hunters climbed down from the high seat and approached where he lay.



*Laurie's trophy buck was a full 12 points, and almost palmed – definitely a 40th birthday to remember*

## 'Laurie sat quietly in anticipation, heart hammering loudly in his chest, totally amazed at the immediate response'

The buck's head had dropped into the ditch, hiding his identity to the last. Laurie leaned down and grabbed hold of his antlers, pulling him from the ditch. He could not bring himself to look at his harvested head, knowing that to look would either dash or realise a personal dream. He took a deep breath and looked up at David, who was grinning ear to ear. "Holy moly," David exclaimed, "it's not just a medal, he's a once in a lifetime medal this one!"

Laurie looked down at his trophy and slowly the realisation crept over him. "Seven, eight, nine," he heard David count, "ten, 11 and 12... well it looks like you have a royal roe buck," he chuckled, as he counted the points in wonderment.

Laurie was stunned, this was no ordinary beast, he had incredibly thick antlers and twelve points, and was almost palmed – he looked fantastic.

All the way back to the lodge, and over the hearty breakfast when they arrived, they discussed the buck. He was so unusual with his 12 points and palmation, usually reserved for fallow. There was some reservation as to whether the buck would be classified as non-typical, but to Laurie this was his 40th birthday buck and could not be bettered.

Three months later it was confirmed that Laurie's buck was indeed a gold medal – a most memorable and unusual one at that!

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