Brigid O’Donoghue and her guide Dustin Ledlow pose with the 190-pound Russian boar with 3-inch-plus tusks that was part of a friendly hog-hunting contest with the editor of the Journal of the Texas Trophy Hunters.

Barefoot in TEXAS

By Yubbs O’Toole

In the course of living, one event can often give rise to another. While coordinating Keith Dunavin’s dream hunt at the Lone Star Whitetail Ranch, Brigid O’Donoghue of Bio-Tec Research, Inc. and Horace Gore of Texas Trophy Hunters Association (TTHA), debated just who was the better hog hunter.

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As a “hog hunting rookie,” Brigid received her share of good-natured teasing and, true to her fiery Irish nature, was quick to reply with a humorous comeback. It wasn’t long before this impending hog hunt had a life of its own. These two hog hunt “contestants” gave a new meaning to the term “odd couple.”

Since the Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) issue has cast its unwitting gloom on the deer hunting and breeding industry, Bio-Tec’s editor, Norma Normington, thought she’d try to bring some light-hearted humor to an industry that has had little to laugh about recently.

On Jan. 12, 2003, she posted a proposal on the national breeder Web site www.deerfarmer.com, in which she outlined the humorous debate between Brigid and Horace. Then, Norma asked the forum readers who they thought would win the impending Texas hog hunt by voting for their favorite contestant, and why they made that choice.

In addition, she told the readership that Bio-Tec Research, Inc. would donate $5 for every vote cast towards the production of a follow-up tape on the truth about CWD. She also encouraged the voters to make suggestions as to what they would like to see on a second CWD specialty tape produced by TTHA.

Forty-three votes later and $215.00 poorer, Brigid was established as a pre-hunt favorite by about a seven to one margin because the hunt was going to be an “up close and personal” dog hunt. Brigid’s hours in the gym, as well as an aggressive personality, gave her the edge, or so the majority of the forum thought.

The old saying goes, “That’s why they play the game.” The afternoon of Keith Dunavin’s successful dream wish hunt at Lone Star Whitetail Ranch saw Horace and Brigid step into the realm of the “Terrible Texas Tuskerm.”

The rules were simple: the first contestant to the hog got first harvest opportunity. Dustin Ledlow, an experienced hog guide, used his black-mouthed cur dogs to find the trail of a hog on 10,000 acres of beautiful land, the Running M Ranch, owned by Susan Moulton.

As Horace, Brigid and the referees/guide Dustin wound their way around the rugged terrain, the strike dog hit a strong hog scent and the chase was on.

Well, hog hunting can be extremely exciting. These hogs are powerful, dangerous adversaries, and the competition with the experienced hog hunter Horace Gore only added to the intrigue.

In keeping with the tradition of chivalry, Horace braided Brigid’s long hair so it would not get tangled up in a mesquite tree, like some of the “wise guy” voters teased her on the pre-contest forum.

Always the gentlemen, Horace used half a roll of duct tape on the bottom of
both her pant legs to keep the snakes, bugs, etc. from scratching up her "rookie"

hike.

The following is a narrative of the annual hunt (Brigid's version):

The guide, Dustin Ledlow, and Horace proceeded to fit me with the smallest pair of brush chaps they could find, and in fact, Horace, being the good man that he was, lent me his belt to help hold them up. (Having never been on a hog hunt, I tried to dress as light as possible for speed.) Heroically, the "belt-less Horace," Dustin and I took off into the brush, as the hogs struck the track and took off. I was excited and all I thought about was getting to the hog before Horace. I knew that I couldn't disappoint everyone in the forum who voted for me, especially my mom! I clutched the handle of my "bowie" knife with the strength of a wild woman.

Well, Dustin, Horace and I scrambled through the brush as fast as we could go, and I hollered back at Horace, "Are you keeping your pants up?" since he had lent me his favorite belt. I figured I was out-distancing Horace when the dogs and boar broke to our left.

Dustin and I headed out after them as fast as a roadrunner chasing a lizardsnake—or so we thought! Just as I was feeling pretty good and very confident about the outcome, heard a familiar voice say, "You lost?"

What Horace lacked in foot speed he had made up for in brains and experience. While I ran two sides of a triangle, that old rascal went across country and "cut them off at the pass!" I guess I should have believed him when he told me he had it all planned out in his strategy to defeat me! I knew how the rabbit must have felt in the children's story "The Tortoise and the Hare."

The pack broke back right and darted up a rocky draw and caught up on top. Seeing my chance, I scrambled up the draw and beat Horace to the top. With the aid of Justin and the dogs, I put the "coupe de grace" to a very large, mean, old black boar hog.

As I looked around, Horace was just arriving. I was about to razz him again about the belt and pants when I saw he was walking funny. It was then that he told me he was traveling with two broken ribs from an accident a few weeks earlier.

Horace gave me the first chance since I beat him to the catch. A big, 190-pound Russian boar with 3-inch-plus tusks would be heading back to Wisconsin soon afterwards.

Horace was covered in dust and Brigid found out later the loose rocks and white brush had made him lose his footing on the way up the draw. He was holding on to his ribs and his facial expressions showed he was feeling pretty rough. She hoped that tough old bag of rawhide would be OK!

Well, negotiations are in the process for a rematch. The manager of Running M Ranch, Bill Star, who drove the "hog hunting truck," and Dustin were true gentlemen, according to Brigid. The "contestants" were very appreciative to all who participated in the good-natured hunt. Forty-one votes times $5 equaled $205.00 donated to the production of a sequel television special on Chronic Wasting Disease.

Also, Brigid wanted to give a big thank you to that Wisconsin deer farmer who loaned her his one-pound dumbbells to get her in shape for the hunt. She knew that was what helped her get strong enough to put the knife in that Texas hog and pull him out of the brush. Her friends are already asking about pork chops.

Although those few days of hunting cost Horace his hat, his boots, his belt and a bunch of sore ribs, surely these will be days everyone involved will fondly remember.

Brigid gives special thanks to Horace for the wonderful and unforgettable memories and for the classy pair of boots.

"Next hunt I hope you are wearing Rattle Snake boots," Brigid exclaimed. "I never owned a pair of them!"