Brittany & The Beast

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The wild boar has a unique attraction to hunters worldwide. What they may lack in beauty, they more than make up for in their attitude and ferocity. Hunters across the country have been pursuing wild boar since the beginning of our country's history. With the ever-growing popularity of the sport of wild boar hunting today, many Americans are trying their hand at taking one of these ferocious beasts. Physically challenged and ill hunters also dream of trying their luck with one of America’s most dangerous game species, knowing full well that the roads leading to a boar hunt will be bumpier than normal.

Brittany Zebrasky is an 11 year old young lady who has dreamed about taking a boar hunting trip of her own. Unlike a bad tempered European boar, the cancer that troubles Brittany’s young body is a stealthy yet dangerous foe. After contacting United Special Sportsman Alliance (USSA), we set to work finding Brittany the boar hunt of her dreams. Since Brittany also wanted to face the boar armed only with a knife, finding a suitable outfitter seemed to be an insurmountable challenge at first glance.

We called Dan Moody, a seasoned hog hunter and long time USSA supporter. Brittany’s health issues coupled with the innate dangers of hog hunting meant there would be little or no margin for error. We all would have to be “at the top of our game” literally, so to speak. The catch dogs that were in charge of holding the boar while Brittany hit the kill zone with the knife would have the most dangerous assignment and would have to “Git-R-Done,” as Larry the Cable guy would say.

After our long trip to Texas, Brittany and I walked into a home town café to meet Dan, who was already seated at a table. To his surprise, the spunky young hunter came up to him and started talking to him like she had known him her whole life and told him what she was going to do to the boar once she caught up to him. “There just may be a hog that will get more than he bargained for,” thought Dan as he sized up the determined young hunter.

It often seems like much of today’s society is somewhat self absorbed; a “me first” type of outlook on life. The young people largely take the brunt of the criticism. Unlike any stereotype, 12 year old Hagen Watkins from Uvalde, Texas was a guy that was always ready to help out. Helping a lady his own age get a trophy hog was an assignment that he was more than ready to volunteer for. Seems the fiery young hunter would have plenty of help in the pursuit of her dream boar.
Due to the hot daytime weather, Dan often hunted the hogs at night. The long trip and sleepless nights soon took their toll on Brittany and she fell asleep as the diesel crew cab rolled across the dark Texas brush country with the black mouth curs weavin in and out, searching for their favorite game. In the back of the truck, the veteran catch dogs listened for the telltale yap of the curs, which would mean that their seasoned ability may soon be needed to “secure” a successful evening.

Dan, Hagen, “Uncle” David Perkins, and I were enjoying the peace and beauty of the evening countryside, when that peace was shattered by the cry of a cur that signaled the chase was on. After gently waking up the sleeping young hunter, I was amazed how fast she sprang into the action mode, ready for whatever was to come her way that night. “Let's go kick some tail,” said the gritty gal with a determined look that signaled trouble for the snarling hog in the brush. Dan and I looked at each other and silently chuckled at the bold, brazen attitude of this petite hunter when facing one of nature's most intimidating beasts.

After a time, the cur dogs ran the hog into a thorny thicket and bayed up the wild boar. After unloading the catch dogs, Hagen and his uncle helped Brittany traverse the rough terrain, while Dan and I lead the heavily muscled catch dogs closer to their enraged prize. With one arm now two feet longer than the other, I was glad when we reached the thicket so we could release the catch dogs to do what they do best.

What happened next can only be described as organized confusion: While the catch dogs did their thing on the business end of the boar, Hagen deftly slipped to the back of the hog and applied the wrestler type move called the “wheelbarrow” in which the rear legs were picked up, effectively groundling the hog. That would make the vice-like grip of the catch dogs more effective, and open a window for Brittany to dispatch it with her knife as well.

The nimble young hunter carefully slid up from the back and recalled the instructions of her teacher, Dan, on where to place the knife for a quick, humane kill. The thrashing beast quickly entered a permanent sleep.

After securing the dogs, we were ready to return to the truck and start the inevitable telling and retelling of a memorable hunting trip. The intensity of a hunt like this is certainly off the Richter scale; never to be forgotten.

The future is an unpredictable thing for us all, and health problems only compound that uncertainty. Brittany is a fighter and God willing will overcome her battle with brain cancer. One thing for certain is the value of hunts like this and the caring compassion demonstrated by the sportsmen and women that help make them a reality.

On behalf of USSA, I thank Hagen and David Perkins for their help in a successful hunt, the Pittsville Post 153 American Legion and VFW, and Dan Moody for a tremendous hunting experience. Those catch dogs “Got-R-Done” in style!

The United Special Sportsmen Alliance is an all-volunteer, 501(c)(3) charity headquartered at N7864 Shotwell Lane, Pittsville, WI 54466. For more information, call (800) 518-8019, or log onto www.ChildsWish.com.