



Catch-A-Dream

BY KEN ADKINS

This is a story about my son Cody and an adventurous few days we had together last year with some of the finest people God ever graced the planet with. It is also a testimonial to all of us that with faith, friends, and determination you can achieve your dream.

On May 24, 2002, my wife, Lisa, and I received the worst news a parent can ever get. Our son was diagnosed with an inoperable and highly malignant pontine glioma brainstem tumor ...Grade 4, the highest, most dangerous, and deadliest of tumors. Our son has terminal cancer. We continue to pray for a miracle that only God can deliver.

Cody has always been an outdoorsman, and began hunting with me two years before he could take a hunter safety class. This year he said, "Dad now I know why you keep coming even though you haven't killed a deer yet." I asked why, and he replied, "It's just so peaceful, quiet, and it's like God is right here with us. You can hear squirrels and even a leaf fall to the ground. It's like you forget about everything else and take in the moment." It's true. I have hunted for years without ever killing a deer, but I wouldn't trade one minute of that toe-freezing time with him for anything else in the world.

Last fall, my neighbor saw a feature on the Outdoor Channel for Catch-A-Dream. After a series of emails and a few phone calls, Cody was headed for the hunt of his dreams. Catch-A-Dream really worked vigorously to make this hunt happen quickly for Cody, and on Nov. 25, 2002, Cody and I loaded up the truck and headed to a farm near Nashville. There we met Dean Martin, our host and guide for the hunt. He is such a kind and loving individual. After lunch, Tim Traugott, the Catch-A-Dream host from Mississippi, provided Cody with some hunting clothes, including a very nice pair of boots. The coolest gift was an Outdoorsman's Holy Bible, with a Mossy Oak camouflage leather bound cover and commentaries about the outdoors!

After riding around and seeing lots of deer, we got set up at about 4:30 pm. Only a few moments later, the largest deer I've ever seen appeared. The massive buck just stood there and looked at us, which is highly unusual. When Dean said "Shoot him," Cody took



Ken Adkins & his son Cody pose with the dream buck.

the shot, but missed him low. The monster 10-point turned and casually walked away, wagging his tail and laughing at us. I recorded the whole thing with my video camera. We all looked at each other to decide if what we had witnessed for 35 seconds was real or not. Cody was really disappointed and Dean and I were just speechless.

Dean spoke up and said, "Cody, everything happens for a reason. You missed that buck because tomorrow you'll get one as big or bigger than 'BULLWINKLE.'"

We gathered in Dean's living room to see this animal again and again on my video tape. No doubt, this was the largest I have ever seen, alive or on TV. Cody was really feeling bad because he missed such a huge deer. But then we met Dean's wife Deborah. She is just awesome; she genuinely cares. She and Cody hit it off really well, which is not hard to do when you have the choice of people we had. We were made to feel like family this whole day... just one good thing after another happened...and they got better each time.

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Deborah understood the sorrow Cody was feeling. Saying "Cody, I have a surprise for you." She left the room and came back with a box. She pulled out a Tennessee Titans toboggan and a signed photograph of head coach Jeff Fisher. Cody was like, "Wow, and thanks!" The disappointing memory of Bullwinkle faded every time she reached into the box. It was the final dip into the box that caught all our eyes.... a genuine leather NFL pigskin signed by Eddie George, Steve "Air" McNair, and Coach Fisher. Cody was in heaven. He loves football and loves the Titans, and this was just over the top. This was not part of the hunt.... this was from the heart. I was so appreciative of this because that was a mother's touch.

What we accomplished in a matter of only five hours was to see 1,200 acres of wonderful land full of turkey quail and white tails, meet two of the nicest people on God's green Earth, and take a shot at a monster buck.

The next morning it rained, and we rode around all morning looking for a deer "as big or

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bigger" than Bullwinkle, who by now had picked up another nick-name.... MIKE TYSON due to his chest and shoulders. By noon we had seen 18 deer. Dean said, "You're ready now, ain't ya Cody?" Cody replied "I sure am!"

Before the afternoon hunt, we said a little prayer and Dean asked Cody where he wanted to hunt. We set up 300 yards off the main road at the bottom of two ridges near where Cody had seen Bullwinkle. Action started early. Dean saw the buck first with his hawk-like vision. What stood out the most in my mind was the whiteness of his antlers. Cody's heart throb began. Dean used a doe bleat call to stop the buck broadside. Cody was sure of his shot this time and when he fired, the deer ran. Dean said, "Cody you had to get him good because he 'mulekicked' and they only do

that when you hit-em good." Dean disappeared over the ridge in the direction the deer ran and was gone for what seemed an eternity; he came out of the woods smiling. Now Dean had his own heart throb going. He said, "Cody, There IS a GOD and buddy, he has blessed you with a 9-point big buck! You shot him through the heart."

That moment will forever be replayed through my mind....just how happy and grateful Cody was at that moment. You should have seen the smile on that boy's face! Cody was on "cloud 9" and didn't seem to mind all the filming and the picture taking. Normally he doesn't like to be filmed, but today he was beaming. Coach Fisher of the Titans called on Dean's cell phone and congratulated Cody, then invited us to come back in two weeks to attend the Titans vs. Colts for the Division lead.

Wow! This two-day trip netted lifetime memories and lifetime friends that we will always appreciate. Dean and Deborah made us feel like members of their family and, along with the nice people of Catch-A-Dream, made my son's dream of taking a trophy white tail buck come true. A lot of people go through their life without ever chasing after their dreams. But my son continued to stay hungry for that buck and through the help of several wonderful people a very deserving young man caught his dream. I want to express very special thanks to our most gracious hosts and great friends. With hope love and prayers, I will forever be in your debt. The heart felt warmth and kindness that was extended to me and Cody while at your home is above and beyond letting a little sick boy kill a deer. **CATCH THE VISION!**