



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Corrie Korn, left, Mike Derpinghaus, center, and Brett Cavadini pose with a turkey Derpinghaus shot during the fourth hunting period. He was hunting from a blind in Zone 8, north of Holmen, Wis. Korn and Cavadini called from outside the blind.

Rain, muddy terrain and snores can't dampen special turkey hunt



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An old adage says that when the going gets tough, the tough get going.

That describes Mike Derpinghaus and his first turkey hunt.

Derpinghaus is in a wheelchair during all of his hunts because he is paralyzed below his chest. However, none of that mattered when CKY Outfitters of La Crosse and the North American Squirrel Association, based in Holmen, Wis., got involved.

Rainy weather, muddy fields and reluctant gobblers were not problems because Pat Lamke, Corrie Korn, Brett Cavadini, and Tony Christnovich had a plan and a backup plan.

A La Crosse County farmer gave Christnovich permission to bring a physically challenged individual to the farm to hunt turkeys.

"I had a permit for Zone 8, fourth period," Derpinghaus said. "The guys scouted the area the day before and set up a Double Bull blind for me. Tony brought the Kubota tractor that belongs to nasa and that was my legs to get up the hills to the blind."

Like many turkey hunters know, soggy ground makes traveling difficult.

"This machine that nasa has is magnificent," Derpinghaus said. "Tony simply put the tractor in four-wheel drive and we

never got stuck."

Nasa members have modified the front of the tractor to hold a race car seat, where disabled upland game hunters are able to ride and shoot pheasants. However, Derpinghaus simply sat on the bench seat and the guys lifted him into a chair when they reached the blind.

As with even the best organized hunts, there is miscommunication.

"We wanted to get started early to accommodate Mike, so I was waiting at the farm at 4:10 a.m.," Cavadini said. "At 4:35 a.m. there was no one else there, so I headed back to La Crosse, thinking everything was scratched. On the way back, I met three vehicles and figured that must be Mike, Tony and Corrie."

Cavadini was partially correct. Korn, Cavadini's calling partner, still wasn't among the group, so Cavadini called Korn and woke him up because his alarm clock was set for p.m., not a.m.

With that problem solved, everyone, including Pat Lamke, who joined the group, was set. Just then, Cavadini questioned using decoys and decided to pull them for fear of spooking timid gobblers.

Korn and Cavadini positioned themselves away from the blind so they could move back and forth, depending on how turkeys reacted to their setup and calling.

"We had a huge tom coming in and I must have moved my shoulder a half inch and got busted," Cavadini said. "Then we got two jakes and a hen to come in."

By this time Lamke, according to Derpinghaus, had fallen asleep and was snoring so loud Derpinghaus feared any turkeys would be long gone.

"The jakes and hen stayed close to one another, so I couldn't get a clear shot at one bird," Derpinghaus said. "Finally, one Jake stepped away. By that time Pat was awake and told me it was a bearded bird

and I could take it."

Derpinghaus had decided beforehand that he would take any legal bird.

"I'm a meat hunter, not a trophy hunter, so I was pleased to get a shot," Derpinghaus said.

The 12-gauge shotgun Derpinghaus uses has a modified stock to reduce recoil to his shoulder.

These confident hunters joked with the farmer that they would be back at the farm and eating breakfast by 7:30 a.m.

"It was 7:07 a.m. when I shot the Jake," Derpinghaus said. "Brett and Corrie, who are both on the police force in La Crosse, were more excited than I was."

As happy as Derpinghaus was with his first turkey hunt, he hopes it shows other physically challenged people that they can enjoy the outdoors because there are groups like CKY Outfitters and nasa to help out and make things possible.

Feling Yang is the third member of CKY Outfitters and also is employed by the La Crosse Police Department, but he was unable to join this hunt.

"I'm in nasa to get as many guys outdoors as I can," Derpinghaus said. "Helping them enjoy the outdoors is like a full-time job for me."

There was enough ribbing to go around over sleeping, scaring off a gobbler, falling asleep in a blind and poor calling, but that also was part of what made Derpinghaus' turkey hunt special.

"As soon as Mike shot his turkey, the blind went up and he was on his cell phone to Tony at the bait shop," Korn said. "Tony is about 20 minutes away, but I think he was up there in five minutes."

It's a good thing these police officers were off duty that Saturday.

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