

# Humungous hog hunt a heart-stopper for Brickner

By Kelly O'Day

When Merrill's Jim Brickner decided to wrap a little pleasure around a late-April business trip to Texas, little did he expect to shoot one of the larger wild hogs ever bagged in the area of his hunt.

Even less did he expect to come down to his final shell on a scary middle-of-the-night trek through impossibly thick undergrowth and pitch-black ravines, chasing what those involved have come to refer to as the "Swamp Monster."

"It was very exhilarating," Brickner said. "I didn't realize chasing them in the dark was part of the sport. I'm sure it's the same as Africa, with thick brush and animals that aren't very happy with you. Think of tag alders with thorns."

The wild hog weighed out at 330 pounds, sporting 3-1/2" cutters, and even the weighing process was an eye-opener.

"The biggest one they had shot in the past year was 224 pounds," Brickner said. "They didn't know if they had ever had one that big, and I luck out and run into it. When they were hanging it up, the winch comes to a stop and the nose was still on the ground. The guy looks at me and (salesman) Mark (LeDuc) and says, 'Whoa, that's never happened before.'"

After picking up a couple of vans from a car auction, Brickner and LeDuc headed over to Talco, TX, to Hearts Bluff Ranch, a 5,000 acre free-range (no fences) ranch that offers hunting of a wide variety of animals including deer, mountain lion, bobcat, wild boar, and quail, along with fishing and trap

shooting and a quality lodge.

Waiting in the dark atop a stand for several hours, Brickner finally heard a hog approach his shooting lane. LeDuc fired his gun in the distance, so Brickner hurriedly flipped on his spotlight and raised his gun, just in time to get off a shot at a large hog wrapped in mist and smoke.

Now the heart-pounding chase was on, and it led into a deep gully.

"At that point we had one working light, I had the only gun and we were fixing to chase a wounded hog," Brickner said. "It was really amazing. We would stop, be real quiet and the rustling would start again. It was almost as if the animal was unnerved by us being quiet. (Guide/Biologist) Zach (Willeford) suddenly says, 'Shoot, he's behind that bush,' so I up and shot a bush."

After the hog threatened to charge, the chase continued for another 200 yards and a tough third shot from his Winchester 7 Mag four-shot magazine, but the hog disappeared through another gully. On the other side it finally presented an open look, and Brickner finished it off.

"I really am glad I put that fourth shell in the gun earlier," he said.

Now came time to drag the monster back within range of the four-wheelers by the stand, the location of which Brickner unerringly predicted to the amazement of Willeford.

"I suggested we gut the thing out to make it easier and Zach gave me a look like I was really nuts," Brickner said. "He says, 'Yur not goin' ta eat this thing.' I said, 'Well, OK, I agree. I shot it twice in the hindquarters and probably ruined the meat.' He said when they get this big the meat is too tough and gamey."

Forget the meat, Brickner will always remember the experience.



Photo furnished

MERRILL'S JIM BRICKNER shows off the hairy denizen of the swampy world that he recently shot during a Texas hunting trip.

## Swingers stumble at 2nd WVC meet

By Kelly O'Day

The Bluejay golfers broke out of their funk by tying for first place in last Tuesday's Bass Lake warm-up, but when they returned on Friday for the WVC #2 they slipped back to a seventh-place finish.

Merrill scored a 333, just two strokes behind Wausau East and Marshfield, and four teams broke 320.

Andy Privette (40-41-81) and Josh Grisa (45-38-83) led the way, and freshman Dan Hoffman (42-42-84) and Brandon Brunett (44-41-85) capped the scoring. Alex Hauswirth (42-44-86) just missed.

"Andy led the team in scoring for the day, but not without one triple bogie on the 16th hole, a sharp dog leg par four," MHS assistant Joe Mertens said. "He has been frustrated but is optimistic he will break through soon, much like he did last year at regionals and sectionals before finishing 17th at state."

"Dan Hoffman and Alex Hauswirth played their best rounds of the year. Although Josh Grisa played the front nine in a disappointing 45, he

came back on the back side to round out a decent score. Brandon Brunett started with trouble on the very first hole, making a 9 on the tricky par 4, but then settled into his game."

Merrill is tied with Everest for 7th after 2-of-3 legs of the WVC Meet.

**Team Standings-SPASH 305-622, Antigo 316-638, Wausau W. 319-653, WI Rapids 314-654, Wausau E. 331-655, Marshfield 331-678, Merrill 333-686, D.C.E. 351-686, Rhinelander 376-752.**

### WVC preparation

Merrill shot a season-low 323 to tie with Rapids and edge Marshfield by a stroke and Antigo and DCE by 3 more on Tuesday.

"It was a nice rebound from (the WVC #1)," Mertens said. "Josh and Brandon closed the back nine with improved scores. Andy made a good run on the back nine, but carded a high score on holes 13 and 18. Dan was solid and consistent."

Grisa (42-37) and Brunett

(41-38) both shot 79 and Privette scored 39-41-80. Hoffman gave a 42-43-85, and Hauswirth (46-43-89) and Dan Baacke (46-48-94) did not score.

### Great Scot!

The Bluejays traveled to Green Bay on Saturday and

finished 6th of 10 teams at Royal Scot GC.

"There was nothing spectacular about the boys' performance," Mertens said. "It was a good experience for them in a two-man best-ball format."

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## Hatchets grip and rip at LJC #2

By Kelly O'Day

After taking the Minocqua Triangular by four strokes last Tuesday, the Hatchet golf team stepped up their scoring and placed second to Medford in both Thursday's warm-up and Saturday's LJC #2 at Park Falls C.C.

Tomahawk hit just 320 to rank within 7 strokes of Medford in the conference meet.

"We were able to put together some nice 18-hole scores today," THS coach Garth Gerstenberger said. "This was our best effort of

the season so far. Alex (Cummings) had some great iron play. (Sophomore) Dave Twomey shot under 80 for the first tie in his high school career."

Cummings tied for 4th with 36-41-77 and Twomey was 6th at 40-38-78. Chris Bucks (43-49-82) also picked up All-Conference points in a 3-way tie for 8th. Ryan Flynn (40-43-83) capped the scoring and Rich Twomey (42-42-84) just missed.

**Team scores-Medford 313, Tomahawk 320, Park Falls 329, Lakeland 331, Phillips 352, N. Pines 363.**

### Falls tune-up

The Hatchets hit 161 behind Cummings 4th-place 38, and 41's from Rich and Dave Twomey and Flynn. Bucks carded 42.

"Our guys were able to avoid the blow-up holes for the most part," Gerstenberger said. "This was a good look at the course."

**Team scores-Medford 155, Tomahawk 161, Park Falls 164, N. Pines 165, Lakeland 167, Phillips 168.**

### Minocqua try

Bucks fired a 37-42-79 to grab medalist honors. "Chris had 10 pars, 2

birdies and only 28 putts on the day," Gerstenberger said. "It was great to see Chris have a nice round on a tough course."

Cummings (41-43-84), Dave Twomey (44-45-89) and Flynn (45-45-90) scored and Rich Twomey (51-45-96) played.

**Team scores-Tomahawk 342, Lakeland 346, N. Pines 355.**

Tomahawk played at Merrill on Tues. and will go to Lakeland on Thurs. and Phillips on Sat. for the LJC #3. Regionals will be played Peshtigo next Tues.

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