



We Will Not Be Tamed

TEXAS IS DEFINED BY ICONIC LANDSCAPES, FROM BIG BEND TO THE PINEY WOODS. IT IS THE LAND THAT DEFINES US AS TEXANS, TEN DISTINCT ECOREGIONS AS DIVERSE AS ITS PEOPLE. ONE OF THOSE REGIONS IS THE SOUTH TEXAS PLAINS, ONE OF THE TOP DESTINATIONS IN THE WORLD FOR HUNTERS LIKE JORDAN SHIPLEY.

“The one time it happens right, you remember it forever.”

As a star wide receiver at the University of Texas, Jordan Shipley's obsessive approach to the craft won him recognition as an All American athlete. After four years in the NFL, Shipley brings that focus to bow hunting, most recently on the Outdoor Channel show "Bucks of Tecomate," where he follows some of the country's best white-tailed deer hunters as they teach the secrets of their craft.

“I was terrible when I first started. Most people I know were. I started off helping my granddad guide quail hunts near Abilene. That kind of made an outdoor junkie out of me. And Grandma—she's 83, and she's a white-tail fanatic. She'll embarrass you with a fishing pole, too. You don't want to compete with her.

“My Dad's a football coach. He always said, 'To accomplish things few people accomplish, you have to do things that few are willing to do.' A lot of times, people were going out on Saturday and I was lifting weights at midnight, thinking, 'Wow, what am I doing?' But I wasn't that much better than everybody else, so I had to be willing to pay a price others weren't. “In hunting, people spend a lot of time and money, but they don't prepare themselves. I learned this from football, but it's true of archery and of life: When the time comes, you're not going to be at 25 yards, standing up in perfect light. So I'd practice at last light. I'd shoot targets squatting, on one knee. I'd think about what could go wrong and make it harder on myself in practice than it is in the real thing.

“Anybody that's done archery

knows: You mess stuff up. You learn from the mistakes. You sit there and think the rest of the day about that one opportunity. You worked so hard, you snuck for two hours, and then you blew it.

“And then, finally, it comes together. You figure it out. It's a similar feeling to being on the field. You've caught a thousand footballs, you've gone through a million practices, and all of a sudden, it's game time, and there are a hundred thousand people in the stands.

“When that happens, grown men start quivering and shaking. They have waited; they have practiced; and it all comes down to one moment. The one time it happens right, you remember it forever. It's a feeling you can't replace. Sometimes it's a heartache. Sometimes you're on the top of the world.”

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Jordan Shipley, pictured here at Winkler Ranch in Blanco County, prefers spot-and-stalk hunting with a compound bow.

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