



The Parting Shot

by Thom Jorgensen

Fall is in the air! As I'm writing this for you, there is finally some crisp air to breathe and some color in our trees! While this might mean cider mills or salmon fishing for some of our members, it means hunting season to many of us! This issue I'm going to talk about game awards, two aspects of safety I haven't discussed before, and I'll wrap it up with some information about treestand modifications I've been asked to share.

It's not even October and we've already had members succeed in harvesting bears with their longbows! Hopefully we will all share in a very successful season for deer and other big game among our member-

ship. When the hunt is over, please remember that January 5 is the deadline for all game award applications! Please go out to the website, print off a submission form, and put your longbow harvest in the books! If anyone reading this doesn't have the technology needed, just give me a shout and I'll mail you applications and a return envelope. My email address and phone number are inside the front cover. The game award applications are available here: www.michiganlongbow.org/gameawards/

I have heard of a few injuries recently related to bowhunting and I have a few thoughts to share about them. The first one was a guy who lost his finger when his wedding ring hung up on his climbing sticks. This one made my skin crawl! There is a company called Qalo that makes cheap rings out of silicon instead of metal. These rings are intended to be worn during activities where you might lose or damage a nice ring. They say that they will break under stress, and I know they won't ping against a stand or thunk against a riser like a metal ring does. Many choices exist for around \$20 on qalo.com.

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The second accident involved a guy who put a broadhead through his own leg. There were entry and exit wounds, and he was losing blood quickly. Luckily he was hunting with a buddy who was within earshot and a paramedic. While I am a minimalist in nature and I try to carry as little afield as prudent, I always carry two packages of Quik-Clot either in my backpack or in my quiver pouch if I'm going really light. I decided on the 3.5" x 3.5" size since all of my broadheads are less than 2 inches wide; guys with wide 3 blades might want the 5" square sponges.

Like many others, I've been less than satisfied with my treestand system for years. It seems like every year I try a new stand, or new sticks, or both. Before and during each season I try to retool my system with some modification or change my process to make it work better for me. By the end of season I'm usually ready to start over at square 1. When the 2014 season ended, I used the downtime to do a ton of research; then I took some time to call around and talk to some different folks about their experience with different parts of their stand systems. It is really amazing how much knowledge there is within the ranks of the MLA; most of the best advice received came from our members!

After much research I was confident in my decision to buy a certain model of hang on stand. I got that one ordered, and on a nice sunny afternoon I assembled it and

hung it on my test tree. After everything checked out, I pulled it down and marked every point where there was the potential for metal-to-metal contact. I cut up a bicycle inner tube and zip tied it over every sharpie mark on the stand. After that I laid a long piece along the front edge and created a rubber bumper there, too.





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waist belt and shoulder strap system. I went with a military style Molle II system as it got some really good feedback from some hunters I trust. Here it is looking ready for a long, comfortable walk in.

With it all set up, I went back to my test tree and put on my harness. I started attaching the climbing sticks and worked my way up the tree using my lineman belt as I went. When I got to my spot, I attached a quick hang strap to the tree's trunk and popped the quick release shoulder strap on one side of the stand. It was very easy to hang the stand from here, except the part where I was slinging the second metal buckle around to catch and it hit the metal stand with a big CLANG! Apparently I forgot about Murphy's Law.

I started asking around a little bit, and a guy had a neat solution I wanted to try out. He had bought a pair of neoprene kayak paddle grip cushions called YakGrips, cut one in half and put those over his clamps. Once I saw the picture of it I understood it much better.

Once the stand was perfectly silenced unto itself, I added a really comfortable

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Here is one of my buckles without the cover, and one with. They were \$13 for the pair, so there are surely some cheaper ways to silence these buckles. I do like that I can add slack or tighten by pushing that button through the neoprene with one hand. Also the times I tried to clang it against the stand, it was nearly silent.

The last two parts of my system needing a complete replacement were the sticks I was using and my lineman's belt. The sticks I wanted were easy to find, but a bit expensive to procure. I found a model that used a simple climbing rope to wrap

around the tree trunk instead of a strap and buckle mechanism. The body of the stick has a cam lock that feeds the rope in one direction, then locks back down on itself as soon as weight is put on the stick. I've only done a handful of test climbs with them so far, but I really like them. As an added bonus, I found that each step is a dual left/right step which is very nice when hanging the stand itself. The lineman's belt took a little more researching, but eventually I found exactly what I was looking for. While this might not fit the needs or tastes of others, I found a 10' rope with a prussic knot setup made here in Michigan out of top-shelf material. Safetreehunt.com was where I found what I was looking for; many other similar systems are out there from the more common names in hunting safety accessories.

2015 is the first season I can recall where I really felt 100% confident in the system I'd be using in the woods, in the dark. It's a really comforting feeling as we kick off the season. Good luck to everyone!



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