



## NEWS RELEASE: Thursday November 18, 2015

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### Waseca Native Veteran Harvests Bull Elk

**Minnesota Elk Breeders Association (MnEBA), November 18, 2015** – Each year, MnEBA selects a veteran with Minnesota ties, to be the recipient of a unique opportunity to harvest a majestic bull elk in the beautiful Lake of the Woods area of northern Minnesota. Sergeant Tom Block, a disabled veteran of the United States Army, who grew up in Waseca, Minnesota, was this year's special recipient. The hunt took place on October 9, 2015 and was coordinated by MnEBA and generously sponsored by Tony's Trophy Elk Hunt Ranch, Lake Superior Chapter of Safari Club International (SCI), Midwest Outdoors Unlimited, Splendor Ridge Elk Farm, Mike Kettenacker of Innovative Lab Systems and Wolf Creek Elk Ranch.

Sergeant Tom Block was a U.S. Army Ranger from the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, 75<sup>th</sup> Regiment who served in southern Afghanistan. He was seriously injured in October of 2013 when a suicide bomber blew herself up in front of him while his battalion was conducting a night raid where their mission was to prevent terrorists from targeting high-ranking Afghan officials. Block lost his right eye and most of his vision in the other, sustained severe leg injuries and suffered multiple shrapnel wounds and burns across his entire body.

Block, who now lives in Alabama, has battled back from his injuries, using this entire experience to make him a better person. "It defines me now... It's a part of me as much as my beating heart," he says. Tom now speaks at leadership courses, mentors fellow wounded servicemen and serves as a motivational speaker. "I'm not going to let this be an excuse to hold me back. That's going to be the example I'm going to set for everyone around me, and hopefully I can inspire; motivate in any way possible."

Tom's incredible spirit helped earn him the *Army Time's* "Soldier of the Year" award in 2014, an honor voted on by his peers. Ron Welle of Midwest Outdoors Unlimited, who accompanied Tom on his hunt, also noted Tom's infectious spirit. "When I get to accompany disabled veterans who are so inspirational, that's what this is all about. You picked a really great one for this hunt."

The morning of the hunt dawned bright and beautiful for Tom and his step father Tim Collins, who also accompanied him on his trip. Although Tom's personal rifle got stranded back at the Atlanta airport, his step dad brought a spare, just in case. Shortly after lunch, they came across an elk cow, and not too far away, he found his prize. Even without his usual firearm, he quickly dispatched the bull, as well as the cow. Tom had a fantastic experience! After the hunt, he wrote, "We had a great time! One heck of an experience. I wish I could have kept hunting! My dad also had a blast!! Very excited to get it (the meat and mount) back! Thanks again!"



**U.S. Army Ranger Veteran Tom Block (left) with his step father, Tim Collins.**

MnEBA offers our heartfelt thanks, support and gratitude to Tom and to all United States military men and women for their service to our country.