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Call of the wild

A moose bellows in surprise, startled by the city police cruisers — beasts uncommon in
own habitat. The 275-kilogram animal wandered into north Winnipeg yesterday and
cavalcade of vehicles in a three-hour chase before it was finally caught/2

Loose moose leads merry chase

By Fred Youngs

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The final score — moose: 2; police, city and provincial employees: 1; front-end loader: 0.

The moose is the undisputed but groggy champion of a five-hour escape yesterday that ended in a muddy, windswept field along the Perimeter Highway. The chase involved four police cruisers, five city trucks, a pickup carrying provincial wildlife officials and about a dozen cars carrying various hangers-on.

Near the end, the loose moose managed to bring a city-owned front-end loader to its knees — literally.

The winner is celebrating his victory somewhere near the Whiteshell.

The champ — a 275-kilogram (about 600-pound) bull moose sporting a respectable rack — started the day with a stroll in foreign territory in the area of Murray Avenue and Main Street. The police, finding him to be a bit of a worry, gave chase and finally wore the moose out at McPhillips Street and the Bergen cut-off.

One officer said he and his partner clocked the animal at more than 50 km/h. It was only trotting at the time, he added.

But before wildlife officials could arrive with tranquilizers to sedate the moose, he was up and running again, weaving over farm fields.

Buffalo Bill



It was in one of those fields that Dr. Vince Crichton, Manitoba's moose manager, went to work.

Like a latter-day Buffalo Bill, Crichton held on in the back of a pickup truck as his partner tore after the moose. At one point, the animal gained some ground on them, but the wildlife officials prevailed and Crichton fired a small tranquilizer dart into the champ's rump.

It was the beginning of the end for the moose. It was also the beginning of more problems for Crichton.

Slowed but not out, the moose continued to elude its pursuers. At one point, the animal fell into a ditch filled with water, but a police officer said he chased him out for fear the moose would drown.

It all ended in a field facing the Perimeter where it intersects King Edward Street. Crichton managed a close-in shot with a larger sedative dart and the chase was over, more than three hours after it had begun.

But the moose had one more trick up his sleeve. Not content with just going down, it chose to collapse in a quagmire. And as far as city dog pound worker Al Mazur was concerned, it knew what it was doing.

"Of all the dumb places he falls down in — it's the only wet one," Mazur said as he donned coveralls to go in after the moose.

The mid-calf deep mud was problem enough for the workers who walked into the field to right the moose and keep its head out of water, but it proved deadly to the loader.

The theory was logical enough: roll the beast into the bucket, move over to the pickup and deposit him.

The loader rolled onto the field. It

made an approach at the animal. It backed away. It started for the moose again. All four of its wheels sank into mud up to the axles. It's still there.

Plan Two went into effect now, as the provincial pickup truck was backed onto the edge of the field and ropes and straps were attached to what was by then a very relaxed animal. The truck tried to move forward, but it was readily apparent things were going nowhere.

The truck was unhitched and the five men left the beast and turned their attention to pushing the vehicle back to firmer land before it suffered the loader's fate.

Groggy but happy

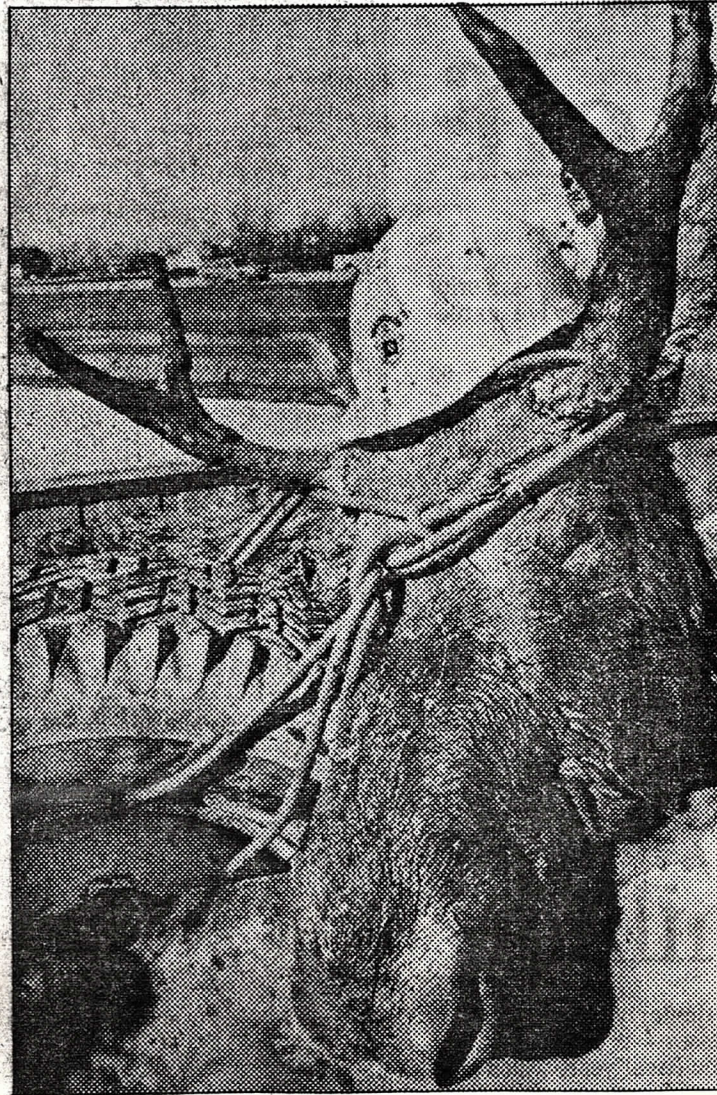
Finally, Crichton and his assistants resorted to pulling the beast out of the field by hand. They managed to drag him the 30 metres to the road where they had to tackle the problem of lifting the animal onto the back of the truck. Another shot of tranquilizer was administered.

The feat of lifting the moose was accomplished by using a wetted-down sheet of wood and a rope attached to a small truck driven by a family from British Columbia. No one is quite sure how they got involved.

With the champ safely trussed up in the back of the truck, Crichton headed for the Whiteshell.

The moose is probably a little groggy but happier to be back in familiar surroundings, blithely unaware of the events he touched off.

Crichton, for his part, is probably hoping for better days. The beast ended up his problem but, as he said, "I didn't ask for it."



At chase's end, a pursuer topped the champ with