

BULL'S EYE



Photos by STEVEN LANE/The Columbian

Visually impaired target shooters Nov Gnik of Vancouver, left, and Joe Daniels of Bonney Lake check their targets at Clark Rifles shooting range on Sunday.



Doug Rasmussen, left, helps target shooter Nov Gnik aim a rifle with the help of a laptop computer and a Web cam at Clark Rifles on Sunday. Rasmussen says he is the eyes for visually impaired persons who want to shoot.

CLARK RIFLES AT A GLANCE

Address: 25115 N.E. Rawson Road.
Established: 1960.
Acres: 9.
Ranges: Four, enough for 36 shooters at a time.
Cost: Membership is \$100

a year. The public is welcome on Sundays for a \$15 fee.
Web site: clarkrifles.org.
E-mail: Doug Rasmussen: doug@accessquotient.com.

VISUALLY IMPAIRED hunters' aim IS true

By DAVE KERN
 Columbian staff writer

The high-tech world is making hunters out of graduates of the Washington State School for the Blind.

On Sunday, Nov Gnik, 34, stared at the scope of a Mark X 243 Winchester rifle and waited for Doug Rasmussen's command.

At the helm of a laptop computer right next to Gnik, Rasmussen announced, "Three, two, one, squeeze."

Blam.

"You hit the X. You did it, man," Rasmussen said as Gnik broke into a victory smile at Clark Rifles shooting range in Hockinson. The shot hit the target and registered on the laptop.

Gnik has 20-600 vision, meaning he sees things at 20 feet the way a fully sighted person would see them at 600 feet.

"It was awesome," Gnik said. He attended the school for the blind in



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Vancouver from 1987 to 1994. Today, he is a residential life counselor at the campus near Clark College.

"I'm their eyes," said Rasmussen, who lives in Sammamish near Seattle. He is an engineer who has a software company and does the hunting as an activity.

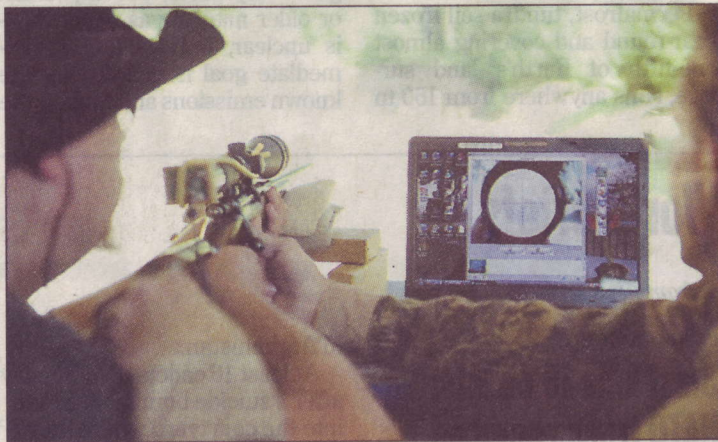
He developed his One-Shot video adapter for shooters after seeing a man in a wheelchair build a contraption that allowed him to hunt.

The system uses a laptop computer, a USB cord connected to the rifle's scope, a modified Web cam and software to allow Rasmussen and a blind person to hunt together.

And it works. Rasmussen, who is confined to a wheelchair because he was paralyzed by a spinal cord tumor in 1982, showed a photo album of legally blind people posing next to deer shot using his system.

Joe Daniels, 34, bagged a deer in 2007 with Rasmussen's help. Daniels lives in Bonney Lake and attended the school for the blind from 1984 until 1991.

Reliving that event, Daniels said he was in the back seat of a Suburban facing outward; he has mobility problems and uses crutches. Rasmussen was at his side. They spotted a deer on hunting grounds near Colville in



STEVEN LANE/The Columbian

Doug Rasmussen, right, helps Joe Daniels aim his rifle with the system Rasmussen has developed.

Eastern Washington.

"Doug said, 'Go ahead, take your breath.'

"I hit it right behind the shoulder. It was a perfect shot," Daniels said, announcing that the feat gave him "bragging rights."

"We're attempting to start a shooting club for the visually impaired," Daniels added.

Daniels' father, Victor Pangan, was at Sunday's shooting.

"I've never seen so much passion for an activity," he said of Joe. "He's taken this thing to the hilt. He lives and breathes hunting."

Roger Baxter of Vancouver helped set up Sunday's event. He said the shooters were accurate at 25 yards and 100 yards, hitting near the bull's eye. He is the shooting club's director of range safety officers.

"I was quite surprised, but they did very well," Baxter said.

The two visually impaired men used a shooting bench at the club. After both hitting near the bull's eye 25 yards away, they called a time out and went to see their marksmanship.

Admiring their work, the two men stared at the bullet holes and felt the impression with fingers.

"Not bad for a bunch of gimps, huh," Rasmussen said, laughing.

On the serious side, Rasmussen said, "It was a lifelong dream to hunt, so I finally started doing it even though I was in the wheelchair. I got my first deer only in 2002."

He said he is grateful his set of skills allows the visually impaired to hunt.

"I seem to have really found a purpose for my life."