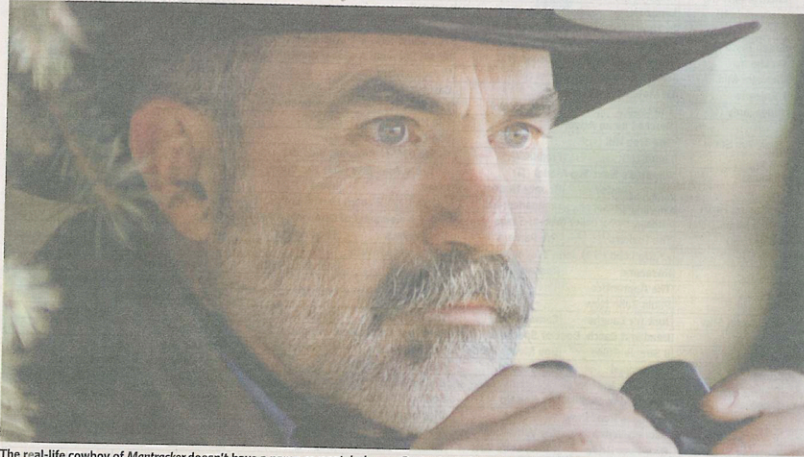


A man in search of his prey



The real-life cowboy of *Mantracker* doesn't have a name or a catchphrase. Contestants have to endure 36 hours of his dogged pursuit

By RAJU MUDHAR

Okay, I think I've found my newest guilty pleasure. Taking "the most dangerous game" and making it into reality. OLN's new *Mantracker* is just the right combination of manliness, survival techniques and competition.

It's the kind of show that already has a genre of movies behind it. Human hunting is featured in flicks like *The Running Man*, *Judgment Night*, *The Naked Prey*, *The Fugitive*, *Gridlock'd* and even *Logan's Run*. It's a ridiculous idea to centre a movie around, but I'm surprised by how well it works as a reality game show.

I think it comes down to the *Mantracker*. His real name is never used but this real-life cowboy, who has helped authorities find missing people in the bush, could honestly give lessons to actors in action movies.

He doesn't say much, but his intense blue eyes speak volumes. The thing that makes the show great is that unlike most people, *Mantracker* seems to be oblivious to the cameras. It's obvious that this guy is in it for the tracking, seriously.

What further proves this point is that he doesn't have a silly reality series tagline when he catches his prey (as the contestants are called). I was betting he'd

say something like "You've been tracked by the man!" But thankfully, he doesn't.

In *Mantracker*, two strangers are paired up and given a three-kilometre head start in some remote area. Their goal is to traverse an area of about 45 kilometres over 36 hours to make it to a certain point without being caught.

Take two strangers, give them a three-kilometre head start and see if they can outrun *Mantracker*

The prey meet up and then start running. Like anything, becoming fast friends can cause friction. The show is a fast-paced chase through the bush and underbrush as the prey tries to escape.

In the first episode, it's Magnus and Jeff. Magnus is a wellness and fitness expert who has a heart monitor and constantly (and sometimes hilariously) lets Jack know what his heart rate is at.

At one point, while Magnus does some Tai Chi or something, Jeff says, "I respect everyone's beliefs but I don't know what talking to a stick will do for you."

The only accessories that *Mantracker* gets is a guide who knows the local terrain and his horse. But while the animal is an asset, it can also slow him down.

In the second episode, two women who are being tracked - realize that bushwhacking is the only way to avoid our man, which leads to this rare utterance of emotion: "These women should pay for this. There's a couple of things that cowboys hate to do, and one of them is leading a perfectly good horse. Those women have got me P.O.ed."

What's also fun is just how much the prey just start hating *Mantracker*.

In terms of actual production, *Mantracker* is well-edited, cutting 36 hours into a brisk half-hour. As well, there are camera-people with both parties, and the prey have their own handheld camera. With all the sources, the show makes good use of split screens to showcase how far ahead the prey is.

Canada's gorgeous scenery is also a star of the show, although what gets highlighted the most is the muck, bush and other obstacles. There's also some education going on here, particularly if you ever plan on being a fugitive.

I just know exactly who I wouldn't want on my tail, 9 p.m. on OLN.