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BEN REFLECTS ON A SUCCESSFUL SHOW CAREER.

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howing Hereford cattle has been one of my favorite passions ever since I can remember. I started showing at the age of 7 in the Junior Hereford Association and in 4-H. The first calf I showed was a Hereford steer named Cheddar. He taught me how to succeed in the show ring and how to hold my

head up when he did not place as well as I would have liked. His mild-mannered disposition mixed with the success I had showing him ignited my passion for showing cattle.

At 7, which is before I understood his purpose as a market animal, I simply knew I could not sell him at the county fair auction. My family understood I was not going to budge and decided to use him as a mount steer for our semen collection business. Recently, he had to be put down due to old age, but I still appreciate him for starting my path in the show cattle industry. If I ever doubted my way in this industry, I would

simply look out to where he was grazing and remember where my love for show cattle began.

I have had some successes in the show ring since then and some occasions of falling short of my goals. But I have learned that winning is not the only way to measure your success from showing or anything in life. It is more about the lessons you learn, the friends you meet along the way, and knowing you did your absolute best in the end. I have met many great people from across the nation at shows who I have made many memories alongside. They have shown me how to be successful in life and still have fun doing it. Many of the people I have met through showing will always be lifelong friends. Furthermore, my friends from showing

livestock are the most reliable and helpful people I have ever met. Showing would not be the same without them.

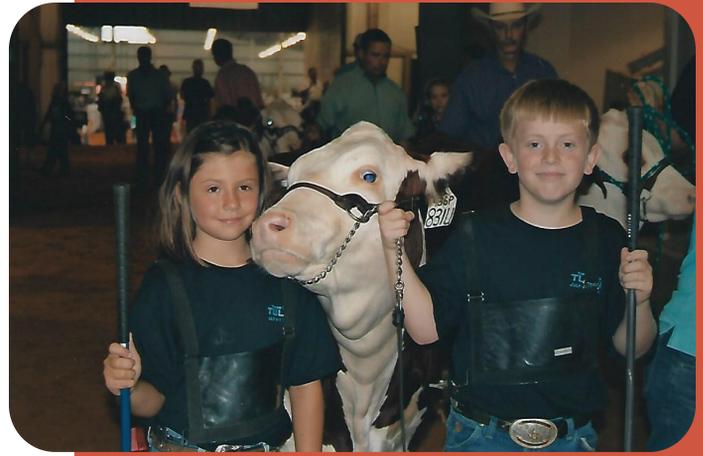
My family runs a purebred seedstock operation that specializes in raising Hereford cattle that can compete in the show ring but more importantly work in production. On the ranch, I learned many lessons on how to raise and handle livestock in the right way. Over the years, I have learned the best way to move and work cattle is to be calm and assertive even when nothing goes as planned. Working on the ranch has also taught me that if I want to spend time with my friends then I must finish my chores first. Not to mention, showing cattle has shown me that hard work in the barn pays off with winning in the show

ring. Honestly, I would like to thank my family and anyone who has ever helped over the years so much for all the opportunities they have given me. I would not be where I am today without their support and guidance.

Also, showing in 4-H has taught me how to work with many species other than cattle. A few years ago, I became interested in showing pigs. So, we built a little pen, set up an automatic waterer, and an automatic feeder for the pigs I bought for the county fair. Showing pigs taught me how to start a project from scratch as my family had never shown pigs before and had very little experience feeding them. I certainly learned a great deal about pigs fast because I had some success in my first few years winning the market hog show and showmanship at my county fair. My experience with multiple species helped greatly with my livestock judging ability. In FFA, I had a great deal of success getting 10th overall at the state FFA livestock judging contest my freshman year. My State FFA Team had won the contest and we went to the National FFA Livestock Judging Contest in Louisville that same year. Since then, I competed in many livestock judging contests judging collegiately at Butler and Kansas State. Evaluating livestock is very important and useful to me. I want to make sure I am staying on the right track when picking out

the correct livestock to show and feed them to the correct point before the show. However, more importantly, I have found that judging collegiately has given me confidence in my own opinion or humbles me when I get off base. As Harlan Richie says, "Judging instills the confidence in those people who may be timid and humbles those who tend to be conceited". I know I am not perfect, but I still try to do my best to judge livestock honestly and with integrity because in the end I will come before the greatest judge of all, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Another competition that fuels my drive to work with livestock is showmanship. This is surprising that I write this after being adamant when I was younger that it was my least favorite part of the show. But I worked at it because I understood that if I showed well my cattle could place higher in the ring. As I matured, it became clear to me that showmanship was the more impressive show to win especially at Junior Nationals. I worked harder than ever the first year I was in Senior Showmanship at Grand Island. But I walked into the ring far too intensely and did not even make the cut. All my hard work for no recognition... I realized over the next year that showmanship like everything else in life was a balance between intensity and being calm no matter how your animal behaves. I





have made top ten in senior showmanship the past three years at Junior Nationals with this in mind. My junior show career days have come to an end, and as the saying goes “save the best for last” I saved my best year for last! This past junior nationals in Kansas City, I was awarded the Walter & Joe Lewis Memorial High Point Senior Award. This award means a great deal as it recognizes achievement outside of the show ring as well as your bred and owned and owned cattle. The Lewis Family have been lifelong friends with both my parents and my mother’s parents so a meaningful award for all of my family. I was selected as the outstanding senior in our state of Kansas as well as receiving the Premier Junior Breeder award this show which I have won one other time in 2019.

Senior Showmanship accomplishment was a goal throughout my last year and one that is extremely tough to accomplish with such intense competition. The Bred and Owned Heifer Show has always been special to me as it shows the result of your breeding program. Therefore, having my fall born heifer selected as Reserve Overall Bred and Owned heifer along with a Division Champion Bull Banner and a Reserve Division Yearling Female it was certainly a bittersweet way to conclude my junior show career. However, I can look back on the memories of the 14 years of traveling around the country annually for Hereford Junior Nationals and remember I have met the most amazing people, seen top-notch cattle, and learned more every year about the Hereford Breed and Industry. I do not know where the future

A top Ten

will take the breed or the livestock industry with so much uncertainty in the past few years. However, I do know that if junior livestock shows are being held. There will be leaders of the industry being raised in these barns that will learn to compete at the highest level in everything they do. I am certain they will change the world for the better. •

