

The Showmanship Advantage: A Stockman's Sense



*Champion senior
showman Brady Jensen
has found success inside
and outside the showing.*

by Jessica Lancaster

One hundred sixty-three contestants were narrowed down to 10 through a series of heats, semifinals and a top 20 final. The top 10 seniors were given 30 minutes to fit their animals then asked a series of questions before hitting the ring for the final drive.

At the end of the drive, Brady Jensen was named the champion senior showman. The 20-year-old son of Kevin and Sheila Jensen of Courtland, Kan., has seen his share of success in the showing and livestock industry.

Brady has taken top honors in each showmanship division at the Junior National Hereford Expo (JNHE) being named champion at every level except for peewee, in which he earned reserve.

Along with success in the showing, Brady has also been recognized for his efforts in preparing his animals. Last year in Grand Island, Neb., he was named 2012 Hereford Herdsman of the

Year and was featured in the September *Hereford World*.

Little differences

When the competition is this stiff, it is the little things that separate each showman. Brady says he thinks what sets him apart is his “stockman’s sense.”

“I have had a passion for quality breeding cattle for as long as I can remember and I believe it translates to a lot involved with both judging and showmanship,” Brady says. “I am very particular when selecting my show cattle specifically in their structural make-up. Before exhibiting them in the ring I like to see how they plant on all fours to find their natural position so I can find out what I need to do different when I show the animals.”

Staying on top is not always easy. Brady continually works hard to try to improve himself as a cattleman and a

showman. He explains working with cattle and being involved in agriculture is a rewarding experience and he wants to be involved in the beef industry the rest of his life.

He says his toughest challenge in showmanship is at the JNHE. At the national level with everything going on, it makes it harder to stay focused, and the long days require an animal that will work with you all day.

Brady summed it up best by saying, “The long and stressful day of showing in your heat, semifinal, and then finals can be a daunting task but you must be elite in everything you do in the ring.”

Brady has found that mental preparation is key in both livestock judging and in the showmanship ring. He realizes that both events require him to be on top of his game.

For him, that all starts with a good supper followed by a good night’s sleep



the night before a big contest. This involved him shutting off his cell phone early in the night so he could clear his mind and concentrate. Brady realized the importance of having his mind clear, so he could devote his undivided attention to the task at hand.

A judge's perspective

For the fitting portion of the national showmanship contest, Tom and Tammy Boatman, senior showmanship judges, were joined by 2013 Hereford Herdsman of the Year Jay Creamer. It was the first opportunity that Tom and Tammy had gotten to work closely with Jay. Tammy says the trio noticed similar details and agreed on how the showmen should be placed.

After the fitting portion, the judges asked the contestants to keep their heifers in the chutes while they asked each contestant a few questions. The judges didn't want the contest to come down to which showman had a greater knowledge base.

The questions they asked had no right or wrong answers; the judges simply wanted to see how the contestants would respond and communicate. The first question contained two parts: they wanted to know how the contestants had prepared for the competition and what their thought processes had been once they were selected to be in the top 10.

Looking back on the contestants' answers, Tom and Tammy recalled, "Brady went into how success in the showmanship ring dated clear back to weaning and halter breaking. He also included his family history and the role that they play in his success. The finalists all had good answers."

The judges' second question dealt with the good times the Hereford industry has been experiencing. With record-setting sales and a growing membership, they wanted to know what the finalists thought the industry should do to keep Herefords on top.

The judges recalled Brady's answer and were impressed: "Brady covered the showing aspect and how many new

members join the association to show, but completed his answer by adding some input about the commercial cattleman. He talked about the importance of udder quality, structural soundness and the possibilities ahead of the industry with the new technology that is coming out. Brady understands the need for the breed to change as new technology is developed. It was Brady's thoroughness, presence and communication skills that placed him above the rest," the Boatmans explain.

"It was a lot of fun to sort through. The talent was unbelievable," they said.

Standing out

The judges added, "When you are in a field that has this much talent, first impressions are everything. Brady

caught our eye from the time he walked in during his heat and kept our eye through semi-finals and the finals.

"He had a confidence and presence about him. He was always very calm and his movements were very smooth, no matter what phase of the competition he was in. Brady's calm demeanor truly showed when the judges took away their show stick. While other finalists had shocked and panicked looks on their faces, Brady stayed his calm, cool self."

Before the judges placed the top 10 senior showmen, Tammy shared with the crowd, "I was a top 10 finalist, 20 years ago and never saw myself judging at that point. Showing cattle has taken me places and introduced me to so many people. I hope it will

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During the finals of showmanship the judges asked contestants how they prepared for the competition. Brady's answer focused on how success in the showing starts at home.

Showmanship tips

Tom and Tammy Boatman, managers of Perks Ranch, Rockford, Ill., judged senior and intermediate showmanship at the 2013 Junior National Hereford Expo. They both grew up active in the Hereford breed. Here are some things they say they look for when judging showmanship:

- Know where to be and how to make your animal look its best. Have the feet set to where they need to be for the animal to look its best.
- Stay calm no matter what is happening in the ring.
- Be courteous to the other showmen. Leave yourself room in the lineup so you can get your animal shown, but don't take up so much space that your competitors don't have enough room
- Stay in line. When an animal is pulled from the lineup, pull forward and fill in the gaps.
- Always pull into line straight and keep your animal's head straight.
- Do your homework. Rinse and brush your animals daily. Bring a clean animal to the ring. Even though the judge is judging the showman, it is easier to look at an animal that is well presented. **HW**



do the same for these kids, they are the future of our breed.”

Tom followed up adding, “Wow! Absolutely unbelievable. Last year at the conclusion of the owned heifer show Judge Eldon Krebs made a statement that, ‘It’s never been seen before, cause its never been done before; having that many good cattle under the same roof at one time.’ I am going to make the same statement again, but only about the kids out here involved in the Hereford breed.”

Excelling in a different ring

Brady recently graduated from Butler Community College (BCC), where he was a member of the livestock judging team coached by Chris Mullinix. His competitive edge and success in the showing continued on the judging floor where he was named an All-American.

To be named an All-American, contestants must judge at three out of four of the national judging contests — American Royal, North American International Livestock Exposition, National Western or the Houston Livestock Show. The award also includes classroom performance and is awarded to the top 15 in the junior college ranks.

Brady says he has fond memories of having his name along with his team called at numerous contests. He also cherishes the memories that he made outside of a competitive environment — like the time his coach took him to Maryland to help put on the judging contest at Mullinix Farms. The trip not only allowed them to evaluate livestock and interact with contestants but also gave him the opportunity to see the eastern U.S., an experience that was enhanced by visits to Baltimore and the Inner Harbor.

Even with all of his triumphs, Brady still had challenges. After arriving at BCC in El Dorado, Kan., he says he soon realized that he needed to learn how to better manage his time. He set a goal for himself of maintaining a 4.0 GPA.

“I quickly learned even though I was at Butler for livestock judging, school



Brady's support system at home and at shows includes his parents, Kevin and Sheila, along with his siblings Brooke and Ben.



Through the years Brady has placed grand or reserve in each showmanship division. He was reserve champion peewee in Sioux Falls, S.D., in 2002; champion junior showman in Milwaukee, Wis., in 2005; reserve intermediate in Louisville, Ky., in 2006; and champion intermediate in Tulsa, Okla., in 2009.

still comes as the first priority and I am happy to say that I overcame the many missed school days to achieve my goal,” he explains.

Brady will continue his education this fall at Kansas State University, where he is majoring in animal science and

agriculture economics and will be a member of the livestock judging team.

For more on Brady including his top five tips, check out his Herdsman of the Year story on Page 80 of the September 2012 *Hereford World*. **HW**