



The True Prize

Zane Barragree wins the title of 2020 Herdsman of the Year, but says he has possessed the true prize in life all along.

by Megan Silveira

Growing up as a member of the Angus breed, Zane Barragree, Absarokee, Mont., says he always had a competitive spirit. The challenges presented to him in the seedstock industry are ones he says kept him on his toes, both in and out of the show ring. If he wasn't on the hunt for a new buckle or banner as a youth exhibitor, Zane says he was out

searching for the newest, competitive genetics to bring back to his herd.

While Zane possesses a humble demeanor, his talents and accomplishments in the cattle industry are certainly worthy of being bragged about. Zane added another title to his resumé when he was named the American Angus Association Herdsman of the Year at

the National Western Stock Show (NWSS) in Denver.

"I don't have the right words for it," Zane says about the award. "It means a lot to me, more than I know how to say."

Angus grown

The 28-year-old's time as an Angus breeder came about through his father, Brian Barragree's, involvement in the cattle industry. Zane grew up watching his father make an impact on the cattle industry, and it did not take long for Zane to realize he shared his father's passion.

Zane started working alongside Brian on their operation, Barragree Cattle Co., eight years ago and has been slowly taking on more responsibility of the business ever since. Together, they run close to 200 head of Angus cattle.

"It always makes you feel good when your kids go on to do the same things you did," Brian says. "I value his opinion and I trust his judgment."

Brian says Zane has made a positive contribution at Barragree Cattle, building relationships that have helped finalize sales with new clients and making key breeding decisions.

Brian describes Zane as outgoing and passionate, saying he has been proud to watch Zane mature as both a businessman and cattle breeder.



Zane Barragree, Absarokee, Mont., (center) was awarded Herdsman of the Year at the 2020 National Western Stock Show's Super Point Roll of Victory (ROV) Angus Show, in Denver. Also pictured are Miss American Angus Eva Hinrichsen, presenting (left), and Brian Barragree (right).



The young, Montana native's love for the cattle industry reaches past the boundaries of his family operation, however. Zane says growing up as a youth exhibitor and a member of the National Junior Angus Association (NJAA) shaped him into the man he is today.

"You figure out what you like," he says. "Showing introduces you to different types and kinds [of livestock]. In your mind, you start to build a cow that you like personally."

Besides gaining skills like time management and responsibility as well as creating friendships to withstand a lifetime, Zane says showing through the NJAA allowed him to gain appreciation for the Angus breed.

"They're a functional, strong, maternal breed, and I guess that's what does it for me," he adds.

A worthy prize

While Zane's career in the junior world might have ended a few years ago, his passion for the Angus industry has not faltered. He has continued breeding and selling the highest-quality cattle possible, and his efforts have not gone unnoticed.

After receiving the title of Herdsman of the Year at the NWSS, Zane says he was honored to be recognized with the achievement. The award was one Zane says he had been striving for since his younger years as NJAA member.

"It's just a big honor," he says. "This award is voted on by other

individuals at the show, so it's a pretty special thing to have come about. It's a special feeling to be acknowledged for all the work that you do."

Besides being honored by the award, Zane says receiving the title

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of Herdsman of the Year serves as a tribute to one of his biggest mentors — his father. Brian received the same award 25 years ago,

and Zane's success makes them the first father-son duo to have earned the title.

"I have a lot of respect for my dad's accomplishments," Zane says. "I don't know if I've ever vocalized it to him, but [winning this award] was something I always wanted to do, especially since he's won it before."

Brian says he has always felt blessed his son not only looks to him as a mentor, but shares the same passion for the cattle industry. While Brian says it was enjoyable for him to watch his son develop into the man he is today, his true pride comes in knowing other members of the industry acknowledge the same talent and dedication he has always seen in Zane.

"As a parent looking on, it makes you feel good that the rest of the industry feels the same way about your child that you do," he says. "I know what Zane's skills are, but it's always nice to see that others can also recognize those same skills."

Zane says it is hard for him to describe just how honored he is by

the Herdsman of the Year award, but at the end of the day, Zane knows all that glitters is not gold. The true prize in Zane's life is not something he says he can put on a shelf or store in his wallet.

The shiniest award does not come to Zane in the form of a new buckle or banner. The true prize has no monetary value.

Zane says his greatest prize is twofold. First, he is honored with the knowledge that his peers see him as being worthy of awards such as the Herdsman of the Year title. Second, Zane says he is blessed with the ability to wake up every morning and live out his dreams, side by side with his father, at Barragree Cattle Co.

"It's a pretty special feeling to be acknowledged for all the work you do," he says. "[Being in this industry] is a lot of work, but it's worth it in so many ways." **AJ**

Editor's note: Megan Silveira is a freelance writer from Denair, Calif.