



► Watching the judge, Brittnia Carlson (right), Cherokee, Iowa, stands confidently in the showing. Brittnia qualified for the national competition after winning the showmanship competition at the Iowa State Preview Show in June.

Time to Shine

Winning the national showmanship competition is a remarkable way for one Iowa Junior Angus Association member to end her junior career.

Story and photos by *Courtney Wimmer*



► Brittnia (right) waits in line with the other 14 finalists during the showmanship finals. She edged out 46 showmen from 29 states to win the Top Showman award.

Eleven showmanship finalists remained in line, four having taken their steps forward to claim one of the top five spots. One spot, the top spot, remained.

As her name was announced, Brittnia Carlson stepped forward and hugged every fellow finalist remaining in the line. Having just won the most prestigious junior showmanship contest, she wanted to first congratulate the National Junior Angus Association (NJAA) members who competed with her.

Brittnia, Cherokee, Iowa, edged out 46 other competitors from 29 states to be named winner of the Top Showman award at the 2002 National

Junior Angus Show (NJAS) in Milwaukee, Wis.

Chad Ward, Eldorado, Ohio, served as a judge for the competition and says it was a unanimous decision to name Brittnia the winner.

"She really stood out to us. She was really relaxed; she never got excited about anything," Ward says. "At the same time, she was aggressive about keeping the feet placement correct and knowing where the judge was."

Heather Kalino, Elk Grove, Calif., and Brian Finnestad, Rochelle, Ill., also served as judges. Kalino says Brittnia was consistent throughout both days of competition, and it was evident that she wanted to be the champion.

"There were a couple times she was getting sandwiched in between a couple people, and instead of upsetting the whole group, she just got the heifer set as good as she could and just left it," Kalino says. "She was just real smooth, and she made sure that her top priority was getting the heifer set as good as she needed to be."

Proud moment

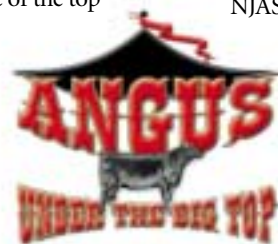
After winning the competition, Brittnia shared her excitement with her mother, Janice, and many other supporters from Iowa. Her father, Mark, had to leave the NJAS early to take

Brittnia's brother, Michael, to the Cherokee County Fair in Iowa.

"My son was in the showing at the county fair at the time," Mark

says. "I was holding a calf, and he was showing a calf and there was this call from Milwaukee. All I could think was 'Oh no, something bad happened.'"

A woman at the show asked Mark what happened. When he told her Brittnia had just won the showmanship competition, she ran to an announcer to broadcast the news. "They did this big spiel about how someone from Cherokee County was able to go



on to the national level and achieve something like that and how proud they were that we had someone representing Cherokee, Iowa. Everyone was really happy,” Mark says.

Mark and Janice Carlson operate Carlson Family Angus in Cherokee, Iowa. They have 100 purebred Angus cows and sell bulls to commercial producers in northwest Iowa. Mark is also a veterinarian at the family clinic, Valley Veterinary Center. Brittnia is a first-year veterinary student at Iowa State University, Ames, and she says she hopes to return to the family veterinary clinic so her father can retire.

“It’s always been my dad’s dream to raise Angus cattle,” Brittnia says. “He loves cattle, and it’s what he’s always wanted to be involved with. He really believes in the breed and what it does for the beef industry and smaller producers.”

Love of cattle

While Brittnia was growing up, Mark encouraged her love of cattle.

“She wanted a bottle calf when she was 6 years old, so I went to a dairy and I got a bottle calf named Matthew for her,” he says. “She’d be up at 6 in the morning getting her bottle ready and taking care of her calf. She never got tired of it, and she’s loved cattle ever since.”

Brittnia started showing Angus cattle when she was 8 years old and had much to learn.

“I started showing Angus in 4-H. When we started out, we didn’t really have a clue what we were doing,” she says. “I had never watched a cattle show before. Dad handed me a show stick the first day I showed as I walked into the showing.”

Through the years Brittnia and her father have attended many cattle shows so they could watch what other people were doing and learn from them. “He’s always telling me to stand up straight in the showing,” Brittnia says.

Mark says Brittnia has asked for advice quite a bit through the years, and he has always tried to provide some constructive

criticism. “Before this competition she said, ‘Tell me what I’m doing wrong and what I need to do.’ I said ‘I can’t tell you anymore. I can’t tell anything you’re doing wrong.’”

Extended family

Although her father was not in attendance for the showmanship finals, Brittnia had plenty of support and congratulations. She says the Iowa Junior Angus Association (IJAA) has always been an extended family for her.

“Today, I was out there, and I felt like I had 10 moms standing out in the stands,” Brittnia says. “It was really great.”

Her mother, Janice, agrees that the IJAA is a great source of encouragement and support. “We are a very close-knit group, and they are all wonderful to work with,” Janice says.

This past year Brittnia served as president of the IJAA. Glenda Schroeder, Clarence, Iowa, and her husband, Doug, have been advisors of the state association for 10 years. “It has been really great working with Britt,” Glenda says. “Britt is really good with the younger kids. She works really hard, and the kids look up to her. This award couldn’t have happened to a better person.”

Janice has seen what the NJAA has done for Brittnia. She has gained confidence and maturity through her showing experience and leadership positions.

“I’ve seen her go from a quiet, reserved young lady,” Janice says, “to someone who is ready to meet people and goes out of her way to find people, meet them, encourage them, draw them in and work with them.”

Time to shine

The 2002 NJAS was the final national junior show Brittnia could participate in, and she took full advantage of her opportunity to shine. She was on the senior team that won first overall and the Black Kettle Award in the 19th annual Auxiliary-sponsored All-American *Certified Angus Beef*®



► Before entering the showing, Brittnia takes time to get acquainted with the heifer assigned to her. Brittnia started showing Angus cattle in 4-H when she was 8 years old.



► The 2002 National Junior Angus Show was the final national junior show that Brittnia was eligible to compete in, and she took full advantage of her last opportunity to shine.

Cook-Off. She also showed her bred-and-owned heifer, Lita. The showmanship competition concluded her week of participation.

“It’s a fantastic way to end a show career,” Mark says. “We’re really proud of her.”

Ward and Kalino agree that winning the top showman award is something to be proud of and is truly an honor.

“It is a prestigious award,” Ward says. “There’s a lot of tradition in the Angus showmanship competition. It’s probably one of the hardest showmanship contests to win anywhere.”

There is much more to the NJAS than placing first, Kalino adds. “It doesn’t matter what

color ribbon you bring home. Ribbons fade, silver always tarnishes, but it’s the friendships you gain and the relationships you are able to experience while you are at the show that make it worthwhile.”

Brittnia realizes the true prize of her showing career is the family and friends she has gained in both the IJAA and the NJAA.

“My parents and my family and, of course, everyone in the Iowa Junior Angus Association, have just been incredible,” Brittnia says. “They have given me so much support and encouragement. I just really want to say thank you to them, and I really love them.”

