

Mastering the Sale

Texas juniors gain valuable skills from the team sales contest.

Story and photos by *Courtney Wimmer*

Members of the Tejas Cattle Co. mean business when they set out to sell an Angus heifer. They know the pedigree, expected progeny differences (EPDs), phenotype and breeding status of the heifer. They are prepared to answer any questions and to make a sale. For these three members of the Texas Junior Angus Association, the team sales competition at the National Junior Angus Show (NJAS) is a serious event.

InaBeth Donaldson, Grandview; Kevin Gleason, Midlothian; and Zach Wells, Hamilton, created Tejas Cattle Co. to be the model company for their junior division sales team. From creating a company name to designing a sale book, this trio puts full effort and preparation into the contest.

The 2002 NJAS marked the third time the Tejas Cattle Co. has competed at nationals. The team's scenario was to sell a bred, registered Angus heifer, Twin Eagles Erica, for \$7,500. The judges asked them questions about transportation, disposition and payment plans. The team members answered confidently and earned second place in the junior division.

Learning by doing

The team sales contest has not only increased the team members' knowledge of the Angus breed; it also has helped them develop valuable skills such as communication, teamwork and a broader knowledge of the beef industry.

"I've learned a lot about how to look at a pedigree, the kinds of

bulls, their EPDs, how important EPDs are, and what Pathfinder cattle are," Donaldson says.

Donaldson, treasurer of her

state junior association, says she decided to compete in the contest because it would be something she could do even if

she didn't have cattle at a national show. "I like to speak and I like cattle. When I heard about this competition from my parents, I thought I could put the two together."

Gleason, a state junior director, says he knows this contest will help him gain the skills necessary to maintain a successful herd in the future. "I feel that when I do the sales talk it helps me learn how to sell my animals on my place,"

Gleason says. "I've learned a lot about reading pedigrees, EPDs and what the breed averages are. It helps me learn more about the Angus breed and also how to buy new heifers."

Practice makes perfect

Preparation for the contest begins months in advance as the team members practice their individual sales talks for the state competition. The top three finalists qualify for the national team.

"Our goal is to keep our team together, because it's hard whenever you do your individual talks at the state level, and we're competing against each other to win first there," Donaldson says. "We're happy for whoever won, even though we wanted to get first, too. In the end we come together, and we have formed a successful sales team."

At least one month before the NJAS, the team members start practicing their individual parts. Wells and his mother, Merridee Wells, prepared this year's script for the contest.

"We each say a part, and we practice it over again and again

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► Texas juniors Kevin Gleason (left), InaBeth Donaldson and Zach Wells visit before the team sales competition. The 2002 National Junior Angus Show marked the third time they have competed together, and they plan to keep the team together until they are 21.



► Donaldson (center) answers a judge's question at the conclusion of the team sales presentation. Team members Gleason (left) and Wells eagerly wait to answer any remaining questions.



► Practicing with the heifer, Gleason prepares to enter the ring for the team sales competition. Each team member must handle the heifer once during the presentation.

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until we have it memorized," he says.

Practicing their sales talks at home is not enough for this team. They eagerly grasp any opportunity to practice their sales demonstration and teach others about the contest. In June, they were invited to the National Junior Santa Gertrudis Heifer Show in Waco, Texas, to teach a clinic to junior members of the Mid-Coast Santa Gertrudis Association.

Wells, Donaldson and Gleason presented the individual sales talks that they competed with at the state competition. "I wanted to help teach them how to speak out and what process to do the sales talk," Wells says. "We wanted to show them how fun it is."

Making the sale

Their first team sales contest was at the 2000 NJAS in Des Moines, Iowa. They placed second. On the drive to the 2001 NJAS in Denver, Colo., Donaldson and Wells rode together and practiced every hour, much to Donaldson's encouragement.

"On the way up there I was so nervous because last year we were second, and we were really wanting to win first that year," Donaldson says. "Every hour I made him go over it, and he hated it, but in the end I think he appreciated it because we did really well."

Wells, a state junior director, agrees that Donaldson made him practice a lot. "It was like having two moms in the car. I think it could have helped me, as much as I hate to admit it."

The practice paid off, and the team claimed first-place honors in the junior division.

At the 2002 NJAS, weeks of preparation were tested in 10 short minutes — a five-minute presentation followed by

questions from the judges. Each member of the Tejas Cattle Co. had a particular topic to discuss during the presentation. Wells discussed pedigree information; Donaldson talked about performance information, such as EPDs; and Gleason explained the visual characteristics.

"The part I enjoy the most would be when you are right on the spot at the national show — when you

walk in, get the microphone and say your part. It makes you feel good whenever you are done and you think you have done well," Donaldson says.

Gleason enjoyed designing the cover for the team's sale book, which is required to contain three copies of the registration and may include performance data, pictures, show records and more. "I've seen a

lot of sale books and different designs so I can find good ideas," Gleason says.

The question period is Wells's favorite part of the sales talk. "My mom quizzes us over all these questions, and we get out there and the judge asks us none of the questions we were quizzed over. So sometimes it can be challenging, and I like challenging things like that."

Looking forward

The 2002 NJAS was the last year Donaldson and Gleason could compete in the junior division. Rather than splitting up the team and finding a new member, Wells plans to move into the intermediate division with them.

"This is our last year in the junior division because we want to stay together. Our goal is to be together until we are 21," Donaldson says.

All three team members recommend this contest to fellow NJAA members. "I would recommend this because it could help with your speaking skills and applying for scholarships to get into college," Wells says. "It can help you all the way around."

From this contest, the juniors have learned dedication, teamwork and how to set goals. They enjoy competing in the event and working with each other. Even though they compete to win, they understand that winning isn't everything.

If the team loses they can always learn from their mistakes, Gleason says. "I've learned from my mistakes, and I think that if I told anybody what to do it would be to just make sure you know what you're saying and learn from your mistakes. Don't just give up."

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► Members of the Kansas intermediate division sales team explain the positive attributes of their heifer to the judges. Each member of the winning teams received an engraved silver plate.



► Members of the Iowa senior division sales team make a sales offer to judges, who assume the role of potential buyers. Senior division teams are provided with a scenario and are required to select their own animal and to find a pedigree to match.



► A member of the Minnesota senior division sales team prepares to answer a question from the judges. Three topics must be discussed during the sales presentation: pedigree information, performance information and visual characteristics.

PHOTO BY CORINNE BLENDER