



Herdsman of the Year

A Pennsylvania native was honored with the Junior Herdsman award at the 2019 National Junior Angus Show in Louisville, Ky.

by Kaci Foraker, editorial intern

It's crowds and cattle. It's shavings and style. It's the judges' final sense. It's the roar of a champion slap. The pride at the backdrop. He'll win in the next lap around. It's show sticks and white knuckles. It's pearl snaps. It's hustle and buckles. And the thrill and the struggle. And they call the thing a livestock show.

Bryce Fitzgerald of West Grove, Pa., lives and breathes the thing called a livestock show. That is part of why he was nominated by his peers to win Junior Herdsman of the Year at the 2019 National Junior Angus Show (NJAS) in Louisville, Ky.

"For me, I feel it's an accumulation of all the years, all the hours in the show barn and all the preparation to get these cattle ready for the National Junior Angus Show," Fitzgerald says.

"It means everything to see that all my hard work has paid off."

Working for it

Fitzgerald credits his knowledge of cattle to his family's tradition of raising Angus. He has been around cattle all his life and attended his first NJAS in 2008 in Des Moines, Iowa. It's always been a family deal and that collaborative effort allowed Fitzgerald to find success in multiple areas.

"My dad has always told me everything that is worth doing is worth overdoing," he says. "I think a great herdsman is a guy that gives it 110% all the time and a person that goes above and



Bryce Fitzgerald, West Grove, Pa., won herdsman of the year at the 2019 National Junior Angus Show (NJAS), July 15-20 in Louisville, Ky.

beyond to get cattle ready."

Showing Angus cattle has been Fitzgerald's favorite part of being a National Junior Angus Association (NJAA) member, but he didn't stick with it because it was easy. After going to school all day or working a long day at the local hardware store, he still had to rinse and work cattle before going to bed.

"We will leave the barn at dark every night and eat dinner at 10 o'clock," Fitzgerald says. "You have to sacrifice time and your





comfort. Sometimes you have to give something up to accomplish more.”

And accomplish things he did. Fitzgerald exhibited eight head at the 2019 NJAS: two bred-and-owned (B&O) bulls, four B&O heifers and a cow-calf pair. Fitzgerald won B&O intermediate champion bull as well as B&O reserve early junior champion heifer.

Ending his last NJAS on a high note, he received the gold award and placed second in the extremely competitive showmanship contest. Serving as a mentor to other NJAA members, Fitzgerald helped with the educational clinic sponsored by Sullivan’s Show Supply.

“There is no better satisfaction than when you work so hard at home and you get to walk into the grand drive,” he says. “Exciting music is playing and the judge finishes his final thoughts. Then he walks up and picks you. That handshake, you just get chills. The competition aspect is really why I stick with it.”

Lessons received


However, banners and titles are not the only things Fitzgerald gained from his time showing Angus cattle. He says showing cattle taught him discipline, which can be used in any aspect of a person’s life. As he finishes his agribusiness degree from Oklahoma State University (OSU), Fitzgerald may start his own Angus herd and previous experiences in the show industry will help him.

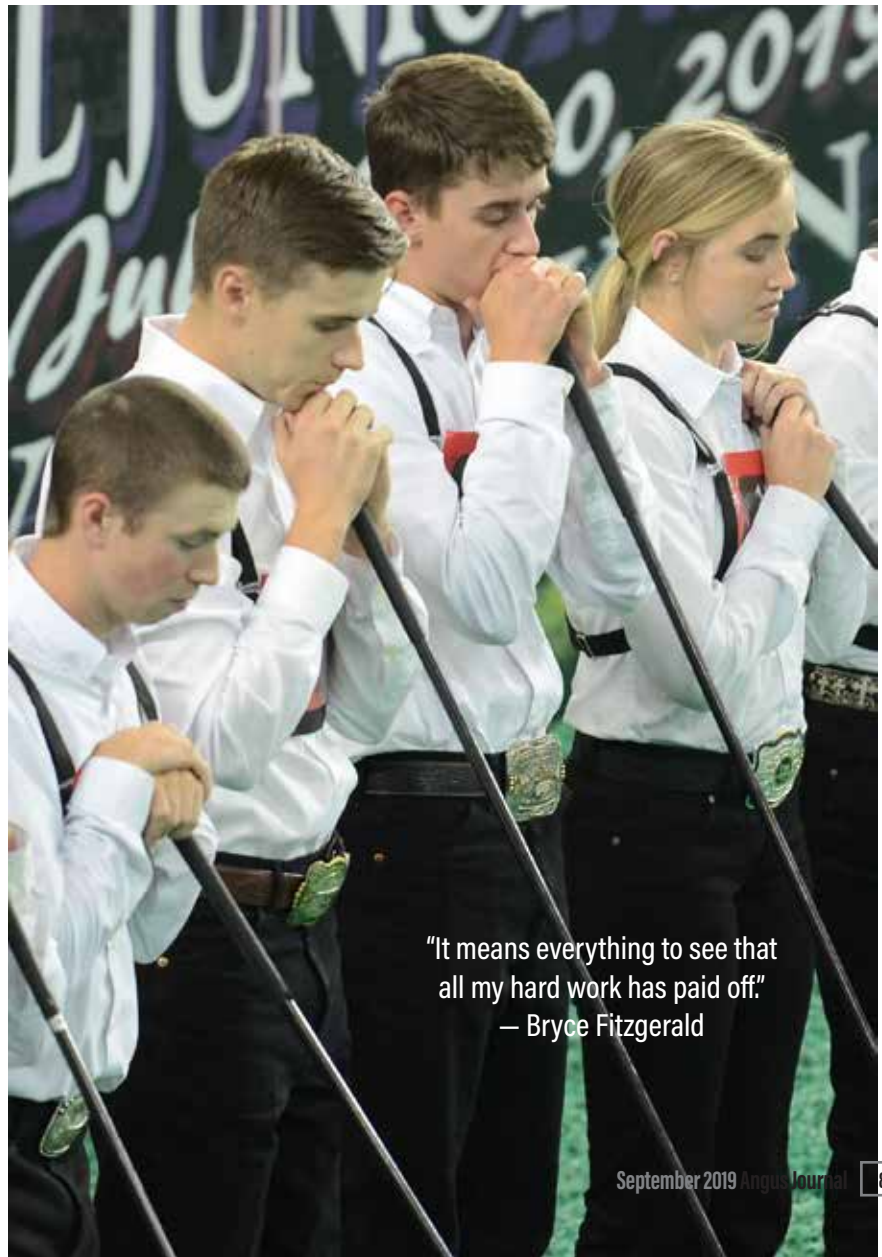
Fitzgerald believes cattle care is one of the top lessons he learned. The effort that goes into caring for cattle at home separates the winners from losers come show day, he says.

But even more than that, it’s a testament to Fitzgerald’s character that he was voted by his peers to receive this year’s Junior Herdsman award out of 889 NJAS exhibitors. Passersby of Fitzgerald’s stalls often stop to talk or ask for a bit of fitting advice, and Fitzgerald is always willing to take a few minutes to chat.

The award is only given to a select few NJAA members that show a strong work ethic, are dedicated to

caring and preparing livestock for exhibition, and have the ability to work well with others.

Though Fitzgerald was mainly focused on his cattle at the show, it was obvious to those around him that his dedication shouldn’t go unnoticed. 



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— Bryce Fitzgerald