



Sealing the Deal

The Team Sales competition challenges NJAS exhibitors to market their cattle to judges in an attempt to sell their animal.

by Kaci Foraker, editorial intern

Buying and selling cattle is a fundamental skill to building the Business Breed. Without profitability achieved from cattle sales, the industry would not have grown to its expansive network.

The National Junior Angus Association (NJAA) simulates a lifelike sale opportunity during the team sales competition hosted at the 2019 National Junior Angus Show (NJAS) in Louisville, Ky.

State teams of three or four individuals make their offer consisting of the animal's pedigree, performance information and visual characteristics to a panel of judges serving as buyers. Contestants are divided into three divisions: senior, intermediate and junior. Teams consist of one state's junior members, but can include up to two members from another state.

Texas, Nebraska and Kansas took home the first-place prize in the junior, intermediate and senior categories, respectively.

Judges score the team on their content, ability to communicate, organization, overall effectiveness and responses to questions. Each team has a set amount of time for their presentation. Time for judges to ask questions is also allotted. Team members handle their animal during

the presentation and must provide registration papers to the judges.

Senior teams consisting of Bradon Burks and John Cox from Kentucky, and Katie Smith from Alabama entered the contest for their first time to market a bull. Sophia Royer, Bryce Hofing and Kayden Nowatzke from Indiana's sales team, calling themselves Three Amigos Cattle Company, attempted to sell a heifer during their fourth year in the junior category.

Preparation

With a maximum of eight minutes to make their sales pitch, competitors develop strategic plans to ensure

each minute counts toward solidifying the sale.

"Since we lived apart we would text each other and created a script to memorize," Royer says. "Each of us memorized our parts, and we came together to practice it. We each do different parts every year and usually rotate those roles. Then there are some parts we stick with because we are good at it and know how to really sell it."

In the senior division, teams are given a scenario and need to select an animal that will fulfill that situation. This year, the scenario was to find a herd bull to use on mature cows and heifers to produce commercial heifers.



Kensley Free, Salado, Texas, describes the heifer her junior sales team is marketing.



To find a suitable animal, Cox and his team studied multiple pedigrees and performance data sets before competition day.

“With the yearling heifers in mind, we chose a bull that had a plus 17 CED (calving ease direct) and a negative 1.7 birth weight, as well as a plus 26 on Milk, so he was a calving-ease bull that would pass on good mothering ability traits,” Cox says.

Dividing and conquering was an approach taken by both teams, as sections relating to phenotype, expected progeny differences (EPDs) and the sale offer are delegated within the teams. However, each team member is well versed on the entire strategy to answer any questions the judges could fling their way.

Presentation

After judges signal a nod of inclination, composed youth in matching outfits begin their sales pitch as they lead the animal toward the judges’ table and introduce themselves with a handshake. From that moment, team members begin convincing the buyers why their animal is the right one for them.

“I learned that you must present something in a good light, in order for it to sell,” Hofing says. “If you don’t present your animal correctly, people are not going to buy it or believe what you say. You must be honest with your customer.”

Indiana’s team highlighted their heifer’s phenotypic characteristics starting with her structural integrity as she stepped with a big foot and wide base, traveled square off both ends and carried that width through her hip. They made projections into her future as a cow, stating her



Kayden Nowatzke from Indiana makes his sale pitch for his heifer at the team sales competition.

longevity and production-oriented traits would be valued in any operation setting.

However, the team had to tread carefully when an unexpected attitude issue with their heifer arose.

“Her disposition wasn’t very great because she has been shown all day,” Royer says. “That was one part we had to get through, because we did say she was docile but during the

presentation she wasn’t acting that great as she was tired.”

Hoping to deter the judges’ focus from the heifer’s attitude, the team remained calm during their presentation and worked smoothly while leading and setting her up.

Joe Myers, senior team sales judge and Kentucky Angus breeder, notes each team must present themselves

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well while still being able to convey pertinent information to the sale.

“One of the more particular things we like to see is when we ask the questions at the end to see how well the kids could articulate their answers,” Myers says. “We are not trying to throw them off but rather see how deep their knowledge is. I was impressed. They were very articulate for that age group and could handle sales very well to bring out the strong points while trying not to show the weak points.”

Compete to learn

NJAS is a place for juniors to prove their proficiency of certain skills in contests, but it's also a learning experience for all involved.

“I learned more about EPDs from my fellow team members and Angus breeders about exactly what they meant,” says Kentucky team member, Smith. “You can't just look at the numbers and know exactly what they mean without a background, so they explained to me what each of them



Kentucky/Alabama senior team, members Bradon Burks, JW Cox and Katie Smith, describe the advantages of their bull to the judging panel as they compete in the NJAS team sales contest.

meant. That knowledge will help me down the road as I hope to have my own Angus operation.”

Nowatzke says his involvement with the contest allowed him to improve his public speaking skills, which is something that will pay off for him as he hopes to be involved with such opportunities as he gets older. From working with her peers on the sales team, Royer admits it wasn't always smooth sailing.

“Together we realized, even though we are all friends we don't always get along 100% of the time,” Royer says. “But all three of us together had to

work through those problems to do well in the contest.”

For Cox's first year attending the NJAS, he acknowledges the contest taps into skills that go beyond the cattle industry.

“Something that is great about this contest is the younger kids starting to show cattle don't necessarily know how to market and sell their animal or even something else,” Cox says. “This contest is a great way to build themselves up and practice those skills used to sell an item to someone.” **AJ**

Editor's note: Turn to page 159 for team sales results.

