

A Long-awaited Dream

Oregon junior Madison Cox takes home top honors in the competitive showmanship contest.

by Peyton Schmitt, communications intern

Each year, Angus juniors across the nation anxiously await the outcome of the National Junior Angus Showmanship Contest at the National Junior Angus Show (NJAS). Whether they're in the stands watching in awe or in the ring vying for the title, this event marks a significant moment for many National Junior Angus Association (NJAA) members.

Madison Cox from Eagle Point, Ore., can attest to this, as she saw her long-awaited dream come true July 22 at the 2020 NJAS, when she was named champion showman.

For Cox, this dream was the product of years of dedication and devotion, not only to the cattle, but



Madison Cox (left), Eagle Point, Ore., won first-place showmanship honors, receiving the prestigious Dean Hurlbut Award, in the 2020 National Junior Angus Showmanship Contest, hosted in conjunction with the National Junior Angus Show. Presenting the silver Revere bowl is Gina Hope, American Angus Auxiliary president.

to the people, as well. She vividly remembers traveling to her first NJAS in Denver, Colo., where she and her best friend, Corrie Falleur, sat in the stands and watched every single heat of showmanship in 2010, completely enamored. She described the sheer amazement they each felt, wide-eyed as they watched the most competitive showmanship contest in the country.

The goal

"We made it a goal that day to be in the top 15 together when we got older," Cox says. The pair saw this goal come to fruition when they qualified as showmanship finalists after the preliminary rounds hosted on Tuesday, July 21, in Tulsa, Okla.

Cox credits having supporters like Falleur, also of Oregon, in helping her achieve this feat. From the emotional first hugs with her parents after earning the silver bowl to knowing her siblings were in attendance to watch, getting to celebrate this achievement with her family made it feel even sweeter. It is no secret the encouragement of the Angus family is second-to-none, and she is thankful for the people who were involved in this notable accomplishment.

And notable it is. For many, the mere opportunity to compete at the national showmanship contest is an achievement in itself. Each junior must qualify as one of the top two

candidates in their respective state to be eligible at the national level. After five heats of intense competition in the preliminaries, 15 contenders were revealed to advance to the finals the following morning.

"To have this chance to even compete in such a prestigious contest against some of the best in the nation was humbling," Cox says. "It especially means a lot to be able to represent Oregon as a smaller organization. Hopefully it inspires younger juniors to believe in themselves and their potential as well."

Annually, the champion showman at the NJAS is honored with the Dean Hurlbut Award, named after the man who organized the first National Junior Angus Showmanship Contest in 1967. With only one year of eligibility in the contest, Cox admits it is extremely nerve-wracking, even as an experienced showman. She described the feelings of intense pressure and anticipation in the make-up area, knowing this was her sole chance at this dream.

"It was scary, but such a rewarding experience at the same time," Cox says. "The second we walked into the ring, as intimidating as it was, the nerves immediately went away. You remember this is what you've been doing all of your life, and you just realize you have to do the best you can and appreciate the opportunity."

More than a contest

It was the responsibility of judges Cheramie Viator, Lindsey Hall and Lydell Meier to select the top showmen and women after thorough consideration. Surrogate judge Parker Henley assisted in the contest, carefully directing contestants as they navigated the ring. In closing comments, each agreed on the impressive caliber of showmen competing. The trio was in consensus on another point—this experience extends to facets of life much greater than a showmanship contest.

“The ribbons are going to fade, and the silver is going to tarnish,” Viator said. “This is about the way you take your NJAA experiences and carry them forward into the next chapter of your life.”

Lindsey Hall echoed this sentiment. Although, like both Viator and Meier,



the show ring was the place she felt most at home for many years, she said she found the experiences continue to be relevant long after a young person's time as an NJAA member.

“You need to take advantage of every opportunity afforded to you throughout the industry,” Hall said.

Meier went on to agree, emphasizing participants could translate many skills learned in showmanship outside of the show ring as well, from a strong work ethic to the ability to overcome adversity.

He concluded by expressing once more the sheer caliber of the event.

“It sent chills up my spine to see you all walk in this morning with that kind of talent, focus and drive,” Meier said. “That’s why I want to do this until the day that I die.”

Cox and other exhibitors were evaluated on the handling of their animal, their ability to follow instructions, and courtesy and sportsmanship in the show ring. Juniors were given preselected heifers and asked to switch multiple times throughout the contest to gauge their ability to exhibit an unfamiliar animal.

Following Cox in the top five were: Tyler Coleman, Modesto, Calif., second place; Austin Ertzberger, Carnesville, Ga., third place; Cassidy Bremer, Redfield, Iowa, fourth place; and Vada Vickland, Longmont, Colo., fifth place. 



The National Junior Angus Showmanship Contest represents the breed's most elite young showmen. For those competing, this is likely the pinnacle of their NJAA experience. The top 15 showmen in the 2020 National Junior Angus Showmanship Contest (from left) are Josh Jasper, Nicholasville, Ky.; Elizabeth Voight, Fredericksburg, Pa.; Madelyn Gerken, Cashion, Okla.; Mattie Harward, Richfield, N.C.; Lauryn Mool, Lexington, Ill.; Corrie Falleur, Gearhart, Ore.; Cassidy Bremer, Redfield, Iowa; Vada Vickland, Longmont, Colo.; Kinsey Crowe, Eaton, Ohio; Shelley Rowlett, Martin, Tenn.; Madison Cox, Eagle Point, Ore.; Megan Pelan, Jefferson, Md.; Julia Weaber, Harrodsburg, Ky.; Austin Ertzberger, Carnesville, Ga.; and Tyler Coleman, Modesto, Calif.