

# Angus Stakes

by Shauna Rose Hermel, editor



## The foundations of a dynasty

Three weeks into the National Football League (NFL) season, the top-ranked teams are sporting different colors than the traditional favorites of the past. Dallas is fighting to keep from losing its third game of the season. The Chicago Bears, the San Francisco 49ers and the Pittsburgh Steelers all are 0-3 (zero wins and three losses, for those football-challenged readers who haven't been enlightened by Dennis Miller's Monday-night commentary).

My Kansas City Chiefs finally won one after going 0-4 in the preseason and losing the first two games of the season.

Tampa Bay, the New York Jets and Giants, the Saint Louis Rams, and the Minnesota Vikings have ruled the early season. While the Vikings have been the nearest to what you could term a perennial powerhouse (and they've had their dry spells), prior to last year, the other four teams hadn't been considered threats for several seasons.

Last year's Super Bowl victory for the Rams gave reporters their rags-to-riches stories and surprised many fans.

I doubt, however, that it surprised the Saint Louis coaches. Is there an NFL coaching staff that's not trying to put together a winning team — a team with a chance of getting into the play-offs? With a chance of winning their division? With a chance of winning a Super Bowl? What coaching staff isn't trying to put together a team that will draw the fan support that will fill the stands and pay the bills?

**What seedstock producer** doesn't put together a similar strategy to fill the seats and put together a sale offering that will build fan support and pay the bills?

While coaches review stats to choose players who will carry out their coaching strategies best, producers comb the *Sire Evaluation Report* for EPD (expected progeny difference) profiles that will carry out their breeding strategies.

While coaches review clips to see how players perform in game settings, producers go on state tours and herd visits to see how cattle perform under real-life conditions.

Some coaches spend big money on high-

profile players to draw fan support and shoot for the Super Bowl from the get-go. Some spread the money and shoot for gaining depth, proving a young player or achieving success within a little longer time frame. Herd managers make the same choices with their sire selections.

Some coaches depend on new recruits, while some stake their seasons on the proven performers of the past. Some herds stick to the proven sires with high-accuracy EPDs, while others are willing to assume the risks and benefits of trying and proving young herd sires.

Some teams rely on a top offense to win; some, defense; some, a blend; and some rely on special teams to create the winning plays and position the team to win. Some herds rely on birth weight; some, maternal ability; and some, carcass cutability; while others target moderation in all venues.

Who's to say which strategies are best? That's why they play the games.

**Unfortunately, there's no** "Monday Night Cow Herd" on national television to reveal all the talents and weaknesses of a cow herd. There are no play-offs to let herds compete for a bowl championship based on each herd's ability to perform consistently and in different environments (although we do have an abundance of analysts and commentators).

Think of the time and energy you put into finding and recruiting your franchise players. You can't just watch the games on Saturday afternoon to find that potential young herd sire.

Some players can put in a steady performance under several coaching strategies and team environments. Some players look inept on one team only to look unstoppable on another. It takes a focused cattleman to put together a herd that will perform without a hitch in its own environment and in those of its customers. The task would be nearly impossible and too time-consuming without the aid of the *Sire Evaluation Report*.

Cattle producers and coaches alike suffer disappointment when illness or injury

sidelines a top performer, when a prospect doesn't turn out as expected or when they fall short of a goal because of one bad call.

Certainly, we've had dynasties in the Angus business just as football has had its dynasties. Whose will be the next up-and-coming franchise? Who will put together the breeding programs that will have a lasting effect on the breed?

**Maybe your herd is capable of** being the next play-off contender. Maybe you've found the recruits you need to successfully execute your herd strategy. Maybe you've got the coaching staff to maintain a dynasty. But who will know unless you have a marketing strategy to tell potential customers?

For most of us, the fun part is finding the right set of EPDs, making the matings that will produce the franchise bull or cow, and producing that set of replacement heifers on which we'll build our future. But if you want to sell 'em as seedstock, you've got to let potential buyers know what you have.

What value does Quarterback Kurt Warner have to the Saint Louis Rams without a marketing strategy to let fans and potential fans know how good he is? Sure, we can find Tiki Barber's and Ron Dayne's (the Giants' "Thunder and Lightning") yardage in game stats of most newspapers, but without a team marketing strategy to unveil their roles and potential, they wouldn't fill many seats on game day. It wouldn't matter how good they were.

Whether talking NFL football or seedstock, sustainability depends on profit. And profitability hinges on a management staff that will ensure a top-notch product combined with a marketing strategy that will enable the owners to capitalize on the value of that product. If a team is not willing to market, as well as to produce, it might as well be playing flag football with family and friends on Sunday afternoon.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Shauna". The signature is stylized and cursive.

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