



Angus Stakes

► by *Shauna Rose Hermel*, editor

Winning at NJAS

Ah yes, the heat, the flat tires, blown radiators, forgotten health papers, bumps and bruises. Even those memories of National Junior Angus Shows long past evoke a smile now. They become part of the triumph of participating on the National Junior Angus Association's grandest stage. For many, it's a long journey.

It's a journey

It was an 1,800-mile journey for a team of California families who traveled together to Des Moines (see page 272). For Alec Gotto, the journey was one of will and determination, the hardest part of which may have been traversing the bed of shavings on show day (see page 128).

For those who participate in the original focus of the event, the cattle show (see page 106), the journey may begin with the purchase of a heifer or a steer. Along the path, they learn how to select an animal with the genetic potential to excel in the showing. They learn the husbandry skills to care for and develop breeding stock. They develop a work ethic with hours in the barn and at the end of a halter preparing for their time in the ring.

Along the way, they learn time management, the importance of tending to details, planning and executing a strategy, working together, and, maybe most

importantly, how to deal with both success and failure.

For others, the journey may involve learning new things about the industry and overcoming stage fright to prepare and present a speech or a cook-off skit in front of a crowd that includes their peers. It may be an individual journey to prepare for livestock judging or a group effort to prepare for team marketing.

Progression

Preparing for the day of competition, coaches monitor athletes in terms of their progression toward a goal. Can you outrun your fastest time? Can you master another pitch? Can you get more rebounds, more assists, more points than the game before or the season before?

It's in that progression on an Association-wide basis that we make the biggest win for the future of our breed.

The winners of the 2017 NJAS were those who walked away with more courage, a new friend, a feeling of accomplishment, newfound confidence, mastery of a new skill and a goal for next year. They are developing the life skills they need to become the Angus breeders and ag advocates we need to propel our industry forward.

It is a treat to watch our Angus youth grow and progress from year to year. Some who were painfully shy the first time they participated in a mentoring mixer five or six years ago have blossomed to become confident, active participants of contests and the show today. They are building their network. They are forming their vision for this great industry we live in, and they will provide the momentum for the breed.

The trailer will rust. The trophies will tarnish. However, the friendships made and the lessons learned by participating in the National Junior Angus Show will forever affect the future of the Angus breed.

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▶ **Mississippi Angus Ass'n Meeting & Banquet, May 5, Raymond**



▶ **Correction to come for the September Next Generation**