



And Then There Was One

JanLee Rowlett takes top honors in showmanship.

Story & photos by **Katie Gazda**, editorial intern

Freshly starched black jeans, crisp white shirt tucked neatly inside: check. Show harness sporting exhibitor number 158: in place. A scotchcomb is snug in her back pocket, her belt buckle is notched, and her boots are on. Show stick in hand and blonde hair pulled back in a neat ponytail, she takes one last look in the mirror, turns and heads for the door. She doesn't look back. It's show time.

"Win or lose, this is it," she thinks.

As she makes her way to the showring for

the final heat of the National Junior Angus Showmanship Contest at the 2011 National Junior Angus Show (NJAS) in Harrisburg, Pa., JanLee Rowlett isn't nervous. She isn't breathing hard or pacing nervously back and forth. She is content. Whatever happens, happens. No pressure.

In the holding area she takes the heifer provided for her, and together they glide into the ring. She and her fellow finalists go through the typical motions of the showring: side-by-side, circle the ring, line up head-to-

tail. She knows her way around the ring like the back of her hand. Heifers are swapped, and she adjusts to her new companion. Mock selection takes place. And there's waiting, lots of waiting.

After 40 vigorous minutes in the showring, the top 15 showmen are released. Between Thursday's preliminaries and the morning's final round, they have exhibited their talents to the best of their abilities. The

Confident.

Casual.

Calm.

judges huddle in the corner of the ring to deliberate. With no regrets, JanLee takes one last look at the surrogate judge and makes her way out of

the ring. Her job here is done.

A short 5 minutes later, the cattle have been returned to their owners, and the finalists return to the showring to await the results, their faces made of stone. Many anxiously clasp their hands together and lean on their show sticks for support. Others share a nervous laugh with a neighbor. But JanLee remains stoic and stable — the true definition of cool, calm and collected.

The seconds seem to go on for hours as the announcer rambles on, introducing each exhibitor one by one. The ladies of the Auxiliary stand in front of the stage with the prized silver Revere bowls shining under the fluorescent lights of the arena. The crowd hangs on every word, anticipating the moment for which they have all been waiting. At last, the judges have reached a decision.

A hush falls over the arena as the announcer is handed the results. He begins with fifth place. Fourth, then third place are announced. The crowd cheers. Second place is recognized. Finally, the announcer reveals the name of the first-place winner: "From the state of Tennessee, exhibitor number 158, JanLee Rowlett."

Hoops and hollers erupt from the crowd as JanLee makes her way to Barbara Ettredge, Auxiliary president, and they embrace in a hug. Pictures are taken and congratulatory exchanges are made. In the 45th showing of the National Junior Showmanship Contest, a new champion leaves her mark on Angus history.

Getting here

"I think every showmanship you do, especially as an Angus exhibitor, leads up to that," JanLee says of the contest. "I knew going into it that this was the last time I would ever put on my black jeans and white

► **Above: JanLee Rowlett**, Hurricane Mills, Tenn., steps forward as she is announced as one of the 15 finalists in the 2011 National Junior Angus Showmanship Contest.



► **Left:** The top showmen from each state competed in preliminary heats Thursday.

► **Below:** Rowlett was named the top showman after Saturday's final round.



shirt and get ready for showmanship. When it was all over and done with, I was just so happy."

Her mother, Kelley, could not agree more. She says that JanLee has loved showing from the first time she exhibited at her local county fair at the ripe age of 5. After that initial experience, she was hooked, and Kelley and her husband, Buddy, did all they could to educate JanLee; her twin sister, Hannah; and her two younger brothers, Lawson and Beau, on the in's and out's of the showing.

"We just took the knowledge that we had from our show career years ago and tried to help her get the fundamentals down, and then from there you just kind of have to develop your own style," Kelley explains. "JanLee works very hard. All four of my kids do. They're no different than many of the other kids across the United States who have Angus cattle. They work very hard and it just

pleases me when they're able to do so well. We're so thrilled. Just totally excited."

Like her mother, JanLee believes that every showman must develop his or her own style in order to be successful yet unique in the ring. However, she also believes that each showman must possess the same three qualities in order to reach success.

"I once heard someone say 'confident, casual and calm,'" she says. "I think that pretty well sums it up. Everyone has their own style, I think, but everyone that is really good has those three things in common."

And while JanLee has no doubt been successful in the showing, she does advise those young enthusiasts just starting out to realize that winning doesn't come easily; in fact, a life lesson or two can be learned from the art of showmanship.

"Patience is one of the first things that comes to mind," she recounts, adding that she hasn't won every showmanship contest she's entered. "I think that's just made me a more patient person and a more determined person and taught me how to go back and figure out the things I needed to change to get better."

JanLee says that in not putting too much pressure on herself, she was more prepared for the final round than she could ever be. She had already made it to the top 15, an honor in itself, and for that she was happy. Being genuinely pleased with her performance thus far, no matter the outcome, may have sparked her subconscious drive to win.

"As good as it would be to make it to the top five — I couldn't even imagine winning at that point — I would be happy with the top 15," she says. "So I went in to the final heat just happy with how I had done so far. The thing that helped me in the long run was that I didn't feel nervous; I didn't put

the pressure of winning on myself, and that helped a lot."

And although JanLee herself has left the showmanship arena for the last time, rest assured that the Angus industry has not seen the last of her. She is just the first of the Rowlett family to participate in the National Junior Angus Showmanship Contest, and certainly not the last. Her sister hopes to compete in next year's contest.

"I plan to help my family prepare and be around to see them show. My youngest brother is 12, so he still has several more years, and I can't imagine not being there for all of that."

As their trailer pulled out of the Pennsylvania Farm Show Complex and headed home to Hurricane Mills, Tenn., signifying the end of a long, yet successful week at the National Junior Angus Show, it was clear the Rowlett family was proud of JanLee, her accomplishments to date and the many more that will come.

"The National Junior Angus Showmanship Contest is where the best of the best convene," her mom explains. "To make the top 15 is such a huge honor. But then to make it in the top five and then go on to be named top showman is just phenomenal. We're still on cloud nine."



► Kelley Rowlett congratulates her daughter.

