

Scoring the Crown

Inside advice on becoming royalty.

Story & photos by **Kelli Fulkerson**

The Miss American Angus (MAA) contest is a program sponsored and overseen by the American Angus Auxiliary. This year during the National Junior Angus Show (NJAS) the Auxiliary offered a Miss American Angus informational workshop, “Wearing the Crown,” to help prepare young ladies for the journey to becoming MAA.

Conducting the workshop were Michelle Rieff, Bentonville, Ark., who serves as program and hospitality chairwoman of the American Angus Auxiliary, and Brooke Harward, Richfield, N.C., 2012 MAA.

Qualifying scholarship

The MAA pageant is invitation only. Each year the Angus Auxiliary sponsors 10 scholarships totaling \$12,000 to \$15,000. This year, individual scholarship amounts ranging from \$1,400 for first place to \$1,000 for fifth place were given to five qualifying young men and five young ladies. This selection is made each spring by the Auxiliary scholarship committee says Anne Lampe, American Angus Auxiliary president.

Each state is entitled to submit one boy’s and one application for the national scholarship, explains Lampe. The top 10 recipients are announced and recognized during the NJAS. Once all of the applications from girls are accepted and qualified, they are sent a letter from the MAA committee inquiring as to their intention to either accept or decline an invitation to compete for the title of MAA if selected. If a top-five

scholarship recipient declines the invitation, the next placing applicant is invited until five young women are confirmed as contestants.

“Ladies, if you know you are going to be applying for the Auxiliary scholarship and you want to run for MAA, make sure that you start your preparations early,” Rieff explains. “If you are one of the top five selected in July, you have four months to get yourself fully ready for that pageant at the North American.”

Pageant overview

The MAA contest is conducted every year in conjunction with the North American International Livestock Exposition (NAILE). Ladies competing in the pageant should arrive in Louisville, Ky., on or before the Saturday that the Angus show begins, says Rieff. The pageant begins on Saturday and ends on Monday with the crowning of the new queen.

Three individuals will judge the contest, says Lampe. One will be a representative of the Auxiliary, someone who is far removed from the governing body and contestants, but who knows the duties of the queen. The second will be an agricultural communications representative who can offer insight about public relations and contestant interaction. Lastly, there will be a representative of the American Angus Association, someone who will have the



► Contestants are evaluated on their personality and ability to interact with other cattlemen, a critical skill to fulfilling the duties of MAA.

ability to judge the contestants on industry knowledge.

The contest features five areas, with a total of 100 points awarded. The following information is sent in an information packet to contestants after they receive their invitation letter and return their signed pageant agreement to the Auxiliary.

Personal interview

The first component is the personal interview. Each contestant’s personal interview will be conducted in a room with the three judges and will last for 20 minutes, explains Rieff. Thirty points will be available for the contestants to earn during this interview. Poise, communication of ideas/answers, and personality are the three areas that the judges will be critiquing the contestants on as they conduct their interview.

Rieff says there are plenty of leadership and career development events available within the National Junior Angus Association (NJAA) that could help a contestant prepare for this one-on-one interview. Not to mention that these leadership opportunities will count as points on your Auxiliary scholarship application. This makes you an even more qualified contender for the crown earlier in the process.

“Make sure that you are yourself in this interview. It really offers the judges an opportunity to see who you really are, and where you come from,” says Harward.

Written test

After completing the personal interview segment of the queen pageant, contestants



► Competing for the title of Miss American Angus this November are (from left) **Kayla Widerman**, Good Hope, Ill.; **Emily Velisek**, Gaithersburg, Md.; **Tylee Jo Williams**, Clarendon, Texas; **Kendra Merriam**, Lowell, Mich.; and **Esther McCabe**, Elk City, Kan. Also pictured is Cortney Hill-Dukehart Cates, Auxiliary scholarship chairwoman.

will take a written test. This test consists of multiple-choice, matching and one essay question. All information on the test is taken from the packet that is provided to contestants.

“Studying is the key to this portion of the contest. If you don’t look at your packet and you don’t brush up on your Angus knowledge, you will do poorly on the test,” explains Harward. “The information that you learn from studying and refreshing yourself will only help you if you are to be named MAA.”

Prepared speech

All contestants must prepare a speech to give on Sunday after the completion of the Association Angus Open Forum. Rieff estimates that there will be at least 50 to 100 people present when contestants deliver their speeches.

The speech topic will be included in the packet that the contestant receives to prepare for the event.

“The biggest issue that we see every year in this pageant is that the girls don’t answer the topic question that is given to them,” stresses Rieff. “The women of the American Angus Auxiliary work hard to create a thought-provoking question that will be challenging yet fun for the contestants to answer. Girls, keep it simple, just answer the question and let your personality shine through.”

There is no time limit or requirement for the speech; however, Rieff suggests that the speech stay within 3 to 7 minutes. Points will be based on poise and stage presence, subject content, and articulation.

Impromptu questions

Once a contestant has completed her prepared speech, the judges will ask the impromptu questions, describes Rieff. Points for the questions will be awarded for poise and articulation, and response to content or addressing the question. There will be a total of two questions asked.

The first question is about the Angus beef industry, explains Rieff. This will be based upon an issue that is currently seen within the industry.

The second question will be about your character. Rieff says there is no right or wrong

answer; this is an opportunity for the judges to better understand who you are as a person.

Courtney Hill-Dukehart Cates, former MAA (2002) and current Auxiliary scholarship chairwoman, offers this advice: “Make sure you study the packet that you are sent. There will be industry information in there, and that is where the industry information question will come from. We are not trying to trick anyone with the question. We just want to make sure that you are aware of the issues our industry faces.”

Miss American Angus Required ROV and NJAA Shows

- ▶ National Western Stock Show (NWSS),
- ▶ Western National Angus Futurity (WNAF),
- ▶ Atlantic National Angus Show,
- ▶ Eastern Regional Junior Angus Show,
- ▶ National Junior Angus Show (NJAS), and
- ▶ North American International Livestock Exposition (NAILE).

American Angus Association.

Contestants will be watched the majority of the time that they are at the contest, recalls Harward. Contestants will be required to attend a group lunch with the judges and conduct ringside assistance by passing out awards during the NAILE Angus show.

Ten points will be offered for this portion of the contest.

Overall presentation

Royalty is something to be admired, says Rieff. As MAA, you will be the ambassador that members look to for representation of this breed and industry. It is important that you present yourself in a manner that is tasteful and poised.

A portion of the five points that are offered in this component will be based upon your appearance, says Harward. You will want to wear attire that you would wear to a professional job interview, something that shows you are classical, tailored and timeless.

“Poise also includes a smile,” Rieff emphasizes. “Not only will that smile relax you, but it shows the judges that you are happy to be here and excited to represent this Association.”

Once crowned

Just as you thought you were done with all the hard stuff . . . really, it just begins, says Rieff. The chosen MAA will be required to sign a

Overall personality/interaction

This is the one area of the contest for which you don’t have to prepare. This is about you, says Rieff. Anyone who is invited to be a part of the MAA pageant is already a wonderful, talented young woman, and the personality/interaction points are offered to the girls who the judges feel would be the best ambassador to represent the



▶ MAA contestants will be asked two impromptu questions, Michelle Rieff explains during a workshop at the NJAS. One question will address an industry issue. The other will address the contestant’s character.

code of conduct stating that she will uphold the contract created by the American Angus Auxiliary. A copy of this can be requested before deciding to run for the position and will be included in the queen preparation packet.

MAA contestants are required to attend many Roll of Victory (ROV) and NJAA shows. In addition to shows, MAA is required to attend one of the *Certified Angus Beef*[®] (CAB[®]) Building Blocks training sessions.

MAA is offered an allotted budget, and she must stay within that budget throughout her reign, says Lampe. If MAA would like to attend more events than those required, she is more than welcome to, but she may not be reimbursed. However, if there is money left from the year’s budget, she is highly encouraged to attend more industry events.

Journey of a lifetime

“This is an experience that a girl will never truly be able to describe or get anywhere else,” says Rieff. “I was a mother of a contestant and, believe me, just being selected as one of the contestants is an honor unlike any other.”

When asked, “What is the most valuable thing about being MAA?” Harward replies, “The life lessons that it teaches you about who you are as a person. Not only are you an influence on the Angus breed, but also you are an influence on the people and the youth that raise these cattle. I will never truly be able to describe how truly blessed I have been with this opportunity.”

For more information about the MAA pageant and the American Angus Auxiliary, visit the Auxiliary’s website at www.angusauxiliary.com/index.html.