

A True Professional

With ease and confidence this showman took top honors in the 2006 senior showmanship competition.

by Angie Stump Denton



Blake Bloomberg, Berwick, Ill., is an accomplished showman. During the 2006 Junior National Hereford Expo (JNHE) he added the title of national champion senior Hereford showman to his list of honors, which also includes winning the national junior Angus showmanship contest and the national Simmental showmanship contest eight times.

Showing cattle since he was old enough to walk, Blake Bloomberg, Berwick, Ill., walked out of the showing July 19 as the national champion senior Hereford showman. Ninety-seven seniors in 10 heats vied for championship honors during the 2006 Junior National Hereford Expo (JNHE) in Louisville, Ky.

Blake, the 21-year-old son of Jim and Mary Bloomberg, grew up participating in 4-H, FFA and junior beef breed associations. Raising club calves and seedstock is the priority for Bloomberg Cattle Co. Their herd includes Hereford, Simmental and Angus cattle.

Family ties

Blake says one of the best things about showing cattle is that the Bloombergs do it as a family. Both of Blake's siblings — Jamie, 15, and Jake, 13 — join in the family tradition.

Showmanship skills run in their blood as Jake was named champion junior showman the same day

Blake took top honors in the senior competition. "It was neater for me to watch my little brother win than to win myself," Blake says.

Jake says he looks up to Blake as a role model and friend. "Blake and I have been showing cattle together since I was 4 years old," he says. "We've spent a lot of time together."

This summer Blake and Jake have been working with 12 head in their showbarn. They start rinsing calves at 6 a.m. and then head to the field to make hay or do other farm activities.

Blake says being involved with the farm and showing cattle has helped him and other youth become well-rounded individuals. "Being busy on the farm or showing cattle is much better than being at home clutching the remote control or playing video games," he says.

Blake credits much of his success and determination to his grandmother, Dede Ray. "She's the 'rock' in our family," he explains. "She attends every show we go to."

This commitment to family does not go unnoticed. "The Bloombergs are very competitive and work hard to win; however, their laid-back style and comradery make showing cattle even more fun," says cattle partner and family friend Kyle McMillan, Ohio, Ill. "The Bloombergs do everything as a family. They all work on the cattle at home and hardly ever miss a show. You don't have to be around the Bloombergs very long to realize they love the cattle business and cherish the fact that they can do it as a family."

Why Herefords

In the final round of the senior showmanship competition, after the fitting portion, the 10 finalists were asked one simple question, "Why did you get into the Hereford business?"

For Blake, whose family just recently got its start in the Hereford business,

the answer came easy. "I view the Hereford breed as being very diverse; there are so many opportunities that these cattle offer to the commercial and purebred cattleman alike," he says. "With the implementation of CHB, Hereford-cross genetics will be a stronghold in the industry."

Blake says he also told the judges about the people of the breed like the Barbers, the Star Lake crew, Jensens and the Mullinix family, and how he has always respected, as an onlooker, the caliber of cattle they exhibit.

According to senior showmanship judge Cody Helms, Taylor, Neb., it was that answer that set Blake apart from the other nine finalists. "He was the quickest to answer and said what we were hoping to hear," Helms says.

Although the Bloomberg family doesn't have a long tradition in the Hereford business, they're sold on the cattle and the people, and plan to remain in the business for years to come.

With ease

"Blake makes showing cattle look effortless," explains McMillan. "Blake's confidence and competitive nature, coupled with his drive to succeed and honed talent usually put his cattle in the champion drive."

Helms agrees adding, "He has a presence in the ring. He can 'flat' show one."

Jake says Blake taught him the key to being a good showman is to keep "cool" in the showing and have good eye contact with the judge at all times.

Blake admits that showing cattle is a learning process that never ends. You can always improve your skills. "His mother, Mary, videos every show; and after every show, Blake watches how he did and finds little ways to make his cattle look better for the next show," McMillan says. "I've met very few individuals who are this committed to personal improvement."

Tips for success

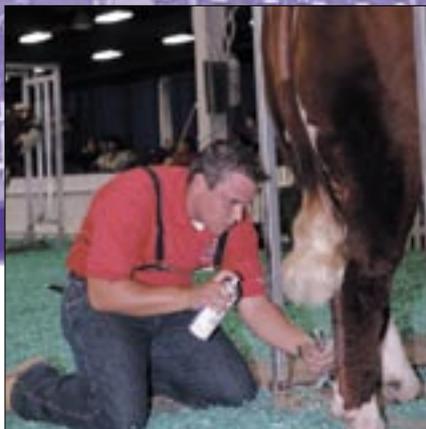
Blake says that the first step to being a good showman is preparation at home. "Do the work yourself; don't just take the halter when you walk in the ring," he says.

A good showman knows his or her animal. Blake says it's important to know an animal's strengths and weaknesses so you can present the animal in the best manner possible.

Blake says showing cattle teaches responsibility and instills a good work ethic in young people. The bottom line he says is that "being a good showman is a yearlong process, not just the day of the showmanship contest."

Looking to the future

Blake is a senior at Texas A&M University (TAMU), majoring in animal science. He is an active



The top 10 seniors not only had to prove themselves in the showing and under the fire of questions, but also at the fitting chute.

member of the TAMU livestock judging team. Before transferring to TAMU, Blake attended Black Hawk East. He was a member of the livestock judging team at Black Hawk and won high individual honors in the American Royal contest.

A talented judge, Blake will evaluate the junior Shorthorn show in Denver next January. Grandma Dede says that Blake will be the youngest judge in the

101-year history of the show. Blake will also help his dad judge the Shorthorn pen bulls.

After graduating from TAMU, Blake plans to continue his education by working toward a master's and then doctoral degree in beef cattle production. He hopes to coach a livestock judging team and someday teach at the university level. Being involved in the beef industry is something he plans to do the rest of his life wherever his career may take him.

"No matter what Blake ends up doing in the future, he will be wildly successful," McMillan says. "Blake's passion for cattle, drive to succeed and strength of character separate him from most other people his age."

For a complete list of showmanship winners, see page 63. **HW**