

# The Rewards of Rivalry

*A small dose of sibling rivalry helped Colt Keffer capture the win of a lifetime.*

by **Christy Couch Lee**

Sometimes, sibling rivalry is to be discouraged. But, for the 2010 Junior National Hereford Expo (JNHE) champion senior showman, it was just the motivation needed to reach his ultimate goal during his final year of JNHE competition.

Colt Keffer, Crawfordsville, Ind., has spent a lifetime attending cattle shows across the country with his parents, John and Terri, and his sister, K.C. Kinder.

The 22-year-old says his family has been his greatest source of strength and encouragement. However, he admits as he watched K.C. capture Junior National Polled Hereford Show (JNPHS) grand champion heifer titles and place in the top 10 of showmanship competitions in years past, a small dose of sibling rivalry arose.

"Watching my sister show made me want to do it," Colt says. "Growing up, I was always trying to beat her, and you get good because you have a goal and go after it. She was my goal. I look up to her a lot."

Keeping his eye on the goal paid off as Colt advanced through his preliminary showmanship heat, reached the semi-finals and was

selected as one of the 10 finalists on Wednesday, July 7. And, as he competed in the showmanship finals the next night, he says, he felt a sense of accomplishment, with a strong dose of tension.

"I'm not going to lie — that was one of the most stressful things I've done in my life," he says. "But, making it to the finals was satisfactory. If any one of those people would have won, I would have been happy. They all did an awesome job."

The moment when he was named champion senior showman will forever be a cherished memory, Colt says.

"It was one of the best feelings of my life," he says. "It was like a weight was lifted off my shoulders. With it being my last year, I had put so much pressure on myself to win. That was a highlight of my show career."

That moment in the spotlight was years in the making. In fact, the Keffer family's show career got its start decades ago at a county fair in central Indiana.

## Family beginnings

Colt's dad, John, raised polled Herefords, and his mom, Terri, raised Angus cattle in Montgomery County,



Colt Keffer was named champion senior showman at the 2010 JNHE.

Ind. They met at the county fair and grew up competing at the same cattle shows. It was only natural for their children to follow in their footsteps.

"I honestly look up to my parents the most," he says. "If it wasn't for them, I wouldn't be interested in cattle. They've always been there for me and my sister."

Colt first exhibited at a JNPHS in 1996 in Des Moines, Iowa, and has attended all JNPHSs and then JNHEs but one since then.

One of his greatest accomplishments was capturing the grand champion bred-and-owned female title at the 2002 JNHE in Sioux Falls, S.D.

His heifers have always been competitive and have often won their classes, he says.

"That's really all you can ask for," Colt adds.

Above all awards or accolades of National Junior Hereford Association involvement, Colt most treasures the friendships and bonds developed with Hereford breeders from coast to coast.

"The people of the Hereford breed are great," he says. "They're nice, and they're generous. They'll give you anything you need, including the shirt off their back, if you need it. Awards aside, there's always someone there to make it a little bit easier."

Eddie Sims, owner and manager of National Cattle Services, Elgin, Okla., says Colt not only accepts help from



Colt says a good showman is always in control of himself and his animal.

time to time but also works to give back to younger showmen.

One such showman is 17-year-old Cody Beck, Bainbridge, Ind. Beck says he and Colt have grown up showing cattle and spending time together.

“He’s like a brother to me,” Beck says. “He’s always been there for me if I’ve needed help or had questions; he’s always pushed me along. He has taught me to stick with it and to never quit trying.”

And, by never giving up, Colt has reached the pinnacle of showmanship success — national champion.

### Tips for the win

Colt says being a winning showman starts with learning from others.

“I’ve had the opportunity to watch some of the best showmen in the world do what they do,” he says. “Being a student of showmen leads to success.”

Sims says Colt’s willingness to learn is one of his strongest assets.

“I’ve known Colt all of his life,” Sims says. “He grew up around the business. He’s always very coachable and willing to learn, and he applies that to his own skills.”

By piecing together strengths of many showmen, Colt says, he has developed a style of his own in the ring. Ultimately, he strives to maintain calmness for himself and his heifer.

“No matter how worked up your animal is getting, you have to stay calm and adapt to what she’s doing,” he says. “If you get worked up, she’s going to



Colt has always been willing to help other juniors and give them tips. One youth he has mentored through the years is Cody Beck. Colt is pictured here congratulating Cody after winning reserve grand champion bred-and-owned honors.

get worked up. Remain calm, and ease into everything.”

Hard work and dedication — beginning at home — are also critical, Colt says.

“You have to wake up early every morning and work with your heifers as much as you can,” he says. “You have to stress over every detail and make sure everything is perfect every night before you put them out.”

By working alongside his sister and parents and by ensuring every detail is just right, Colt captured the prize he’d desired for years. And, those many years of a little sibling rivalry paid off in great dividends. **HW**

## Showmanship tips from the winner

Colt Keffer, Crawfordsville, Ind., won top senior showman honors at the 2010 Junior National Hereford Expo (JNHE) in Indianapolis. He offers these tips on showing success for young exhibitors.

**Stay calm.** “You must be in control,” he says. “Always be in control of yourself and your animal.”

**Pay attention — not only to the judge but also to your animal.** “Make sure everything is set up,” Colt says. “Pay attention to the judge, but not so much that your heifer’s not set up.”

**Don’t sweat the small stuff.** “If a foot’s not perfect, let it be,” he says. “The more you pick at the heifer, the more she’s going to get worked up and the worse it’s going to get. Work with the heifer, and she’ll work with you.”

**Always look for the learning experience.** “If you compete in showmanship and get beat, don’t get mad,” Colt advises. “Walk up to the ring, and watch and learn.”

**Begin at home.** “Everything is linked back to what you do at home,” he says. “Working hard at home makes it easier to work and succeed at the show.” **HW**



Colt’s family has always supported him. Pictured celebrating his success are: Meredith and Donnie Keffer, paternal grandparents; Chandler Fields, cousin; Chisolm and K.C. Kinder, brother-in-law and sister; Terri Keffer, mother; Colt; Susie Keffer, aunt; John Keffer, dad; and Betty and Walter McBee, maternal grandparents.



During showmanship finals Colt and the other nine finalists demonstrated their fitting skills.