

A Royal Dream Come True

Taylor Belle Matheny's dream to one day become National Hereford Queen came true as she was crowned during the American Royal.

by Julie White



Hard work, responsibility and dedication are what Taylor Belle Matheny, Mays Lick, Ky., learned from her parents as she spent her youth working with them raising and showing Hereford cattle. These very attributes, she says, are what helped her achieve a goal she set for herself years ago, to be named National Hereford Queen.

A fifth-generation Hereford breeder, Taylor Belle will spend the next year in her newest role as the symbol of the Hereford breed, agriculture advocate and a role model for young women.

“At an early age I had aspirations to serve the Hereford breed in this capacity,” Taylor Belle says. “This dream began as a little girl watching the National Hereford Queen talk to breeders, speak on behalf of the breed and attend shows and sales representing the breeders and cattle. I’m excited to follow in the footsteps of the past young women that have had this opportunity.”

Taylor Belle competed against seven other young women from across the U.S. for the title. The National Hereford

Queen Program is managed by the National Hereford Women. Queen candidates are evaluated on their involvement with and knowledge of the Hereford breed, behavior, attitude, appearance and interaction with producers, as well as their résumés and interviews. Judges look for a responsible, well-rounded young lady who is willing to spend an entire year traveling all over the country to represent the Hereford breed to her best ability.

First runner-up honors went to Jena McCall, Emory, Texas; Brianne Nelsen, Fredonia, Kan., was named second runner-up; and Stephanie Golightly, Bellville, Texas, was selected Miss Congeniality.

A Hereford family

Taylor Belle is the 18-year-old daughter of Andrew and Suzanne Matheny. She has one older brother, Austin, and her grandparents are the late Charlie and Martha Boyd, Mays Lick, Ky., and John and Jean Matheny, Georgetown, Ky. Her family has been raising Hereford cattle for more than 100 years. Since the age of 7, Taylor Belle has participated in Junior National Hereford Expos (JNHEs), showing cattle and competing in numerous contests, which she says have helped her develop public speaking skills and allowed her to network with other young Hereford breeders.

“I grew up working alongside my family taking care of day-to-day operations — feeding and calving cows and working on show heifers,” she says. “We became a close family through the Hereford breed.”

One of her favorite memories is from the 2015 JNHE in Grand Island, Neb. “We had reserve champion cow-calf pair and after that I went on to show the reserve division one bull,” she says. “We did that together as a family and it’s something we took pride in. The four of



Hereford royalty honored during the 2015 American Royal (l to r) are: **Katie Nolles**, Bassett, Neb., 2015 National Hereford Queen; **Taylor Belle Matheny**, Mays Lick, Ky., 2016 National Hereford Queen; **Jena McCall**, Emory, Texas, first runner up; **Brianne Nelsen**, Fredonia, Kan., second runner-up; and **Stephanie Golightly**, Bellville, Texas, Miss Congeniality.

us worked hard and we accomplished it. We had fun that week.”

It was because of her family, namely her mother, that Taylor Belle was first interested in the role of National Hereford Queen.

“I think I first decided I wanted to be National Hereford Queen when looking at pictures and listening to stories my mom told from her experiences as the 1988 National Polled Hereford Queen,” she says. “And then, traveling to JNHEs and seeing the girl in all white wearing the sash and crown, I think that’s when I decided I wanted to pursue this opportunity. The national queen is such a symbol for the Hereford breed and not only a role model for young women, she is also knowledgeable about the breed. That’s something I wanted to continue.”

In preparation for competing for National Hereford Queen, Taylor Belle credits her parents as role models who taught her valuable lessons and shaped her character.

“My mom helped me get speeches ready and for our grill-off team she helped us organize,” Taylor Belle says. “My dad was the one who inspired us to work hard on the farm and to achieve those goals. They taught my brother and I to have faith in God. We have a strong, successful family and that’s something they taught my brother and I, to put faith and family first and everything else will follow.”

She adds, “My parents teaching me hard work, responsibility and dedication has helped me become National Hereford Queen. Anything I committed myself to, they always said I had to finish. That’s something I’ve always done and it has helped me achieve many things I didn’t think I could.”

A Hereford ambassador

Taylor Belle looks forward to the upcoming year representing the breed that has given much to her.

“To me, being National Hereford Queen is not only to be a role model and symbol for the young girls, but to be someone producers can come and ask questions too,” she says. “This will also be a great opportunity to spread the word about the beef industry. I will continue to be knowledgeable and

up to date about the Hereford breed and be able to answer any questions from younger generations, breeders and consumers.”

Taylor Belle says the Hereford breed has much to offer commercial cattlemen including their docility and maternal ability, as well as their efficiency. “Marketing this to commercial breeders is really important, so they know with a white face comes advantages that will make them the most money in the end.”

One of her main goals for the year as National Hereford Queen will be to organize a service project at the 2016 JNHE in Madison, Wis., that supports local children fighting cancer.

Her grandfather Charlie passed away from cancer. “I had never had a first-hand experience with cancer before and now that I’ve been through it and know a little more about it, I want to take that to Madison next year and find a way for the junior members to get involved,” Taylor Belle says. “I plan to visit hospitals, donate toys and make bags to take to kids who are fighting cancer, so that they can have a brighter day. While we’re there we’ll be teaching families a little bit about the beef industry as well.”

Taylor Belle offers this advice to others seeking her role someday. “I would tell young women to develop a passion for the breed and to interact with as many Hereford breeders as they can because they are the backbone of our breed,” she says. “Be willing to meet new people, make connections with junior and senior members, get involved in your community and take



Taylor Belle was introduced as National Hereford Queen prior to the Hereford bull show at the American Royal.

opportunities to expand leadership skills to become a well-rounded person.”

Looking forward

Currently, Taylor Belle is a freshman at Kansas State University majoring in agricultural communications and animal science. She intends to stay involved in the Hereford industry, possibly becoming a breed association youth director in the future. She is passionate about the role youth directors have in organizing avenues for youth to learn leadership and communications skills in and out of the showring.

But for now, as National Hereford Queen, she is most looking forward to attending all Hereford national shows and networking with breeders from across the U.S. “I’m excited to see breeders at shows and to make new connections,” she says. “I hope to learn even more about the breed from producers who have been in it for a long time and to form relationships that will last a lifetime.” **HW**



Taylor Belle Matheny, Mays Lick, Ky., is a fifth-generation Hereford breeder. Pictured are Taylor Belle and her family (l to r) grandmother Jean Matheny; brother, Austin; father, Andrew; Taylor Belle; mother, Suzanne; and grandmother Martha Boyd.