



The joy on Austin's face said it all when he earned champion honors in the Sullivan Supply/Stock Show University national showmanship contest at the 2019 JNHE.

A True Standout

Austin Breeding, Miami, Texas, takes home the champion senior showmanship title at the 2019 VitaFerm® Junior National Hereford Expo.

by *Kayla Jennings*

Champion Senior Showman

The familiar smell of cedar chips and cattle fill the air. Sights of peewee and junior showmen lining up ringside provoke a smile, as they stand watch captivated by the senior showmen walking into the neighboring ring. The seniors look to the crowd and see parents and friends, among other Hereford

enthusiasts, anxiously awaiting the pinnacle of showmanship day — the senior championship drive. Amid the hustle and bustle of the morning, one such senior showman was leading his heifer up to Stadium Arena for a shot at the coveted title.

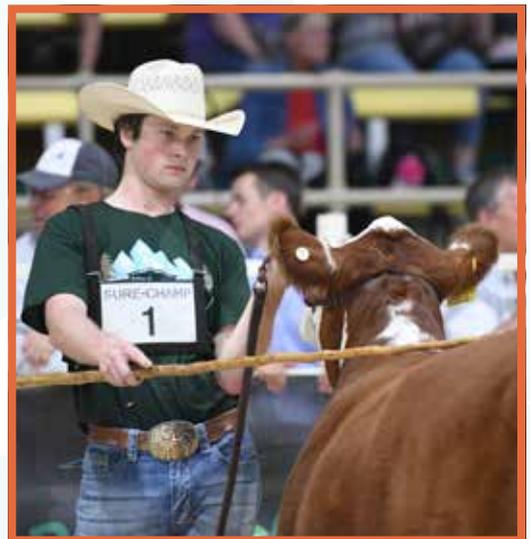
The road to this moment was not the fun, uneventful trip for which

Austin Breeding, Miami, Texas, had hoped. No, instead he fell victim to a car accident on the way to Denver. Fortunately, he had minimal injuries — not as much can be said for his car — but those injuries did result in restricted range of motion all the way up until the night before the showmanship contest. The accident almost caused a scratched entry for the contest at the 2019 VitaFerm® Junior National Hereford Expo (JNHE).

“I was honestly on the fence about showing,” Austin reflects. “But I’ve always wanted to win the showmanship contest. I knew my heifer looked good. I knew my heifer, I knew how she acted, and I knew how to show her. It felt like a good opportunity, and it just felt right at the time.”

Austin's perseverance led him to compete in his showmanship heat July 10. Next thing he knew, he was putting on his hat, grabbing his gum tree show stick and walking in for the semifinals — then for the finals later in the afternoon.

After two hours of fierce competition from fitting to the showing, it was clear his determination and willingness to face adversity paid off big time. Judges Brandon and Rachel Cutrer, Wharton, Texas, and Matt Scasta, Madill, Okla., tallied up their scores and enthusiastically awarded Austin the champion handshake in the Sullivan Supply/Stock Show





Austin's big win was just as special for his dad and other family members as it was for him.

University national showmanship contest. If Austin's grin did not portray the excitement enough, a glance to his father in the audience certainly did.

"It was a pretty crazy feeling," Austin noted after the big victory. "I've won a ton of other showmanships, but at a national level I've never won one. Not in any age division. I've always tried really hard, and so last night I was just more so shocked. I mean it's kind of hit me, but it hasn't really hit me yet that I won."

After 12 years of showing and 10 JNHE trips, it was only fitting the venue of his first junior national and favorite stock show, Denver, was the stage for his senior showmanship championship honor.

Reflecting back to his first JNHE on the Hill, he remembers proudly parading his heifer May May through the ring, spending time hanging out with friends, playing and maybe not working quite as much as he does today. Fast forward 12 years, fostering new friendships and making lasting memories is still a valuable component of showing cattle at JNHE, but perhaps the focus has changed somewhat.

"At the end of the day, success isn't counted in banners or buckles," Austin admits. "It's counted in memories and relationships made, and that's important. But my family has always said it. We're not going to the show to have friends and play around. We're going to win."

And win they have done.

Road to success

The Miami native — pronunciation, My-AM-uh, not like the vacation

spot in Florida — has had a heart for Hereford cattle since the very beginning. The Hereford heritage and the mantra of determination runs deep in the Breeding family, as Austin's grandfather Bill began the tradition many years ago. According to Austin, his grandfather truly set the stage for the Breeding family to continue ranching there for many years to come.

A small herd spurring from Hereford cattle Bill showed in high school has grown into an elite Hereford herd earning champion honors across the country. However, success of this magnitude does not come without hard work and obstacles.

"Around March of 2005 there was a fire that came through Miami, and it burned every blade of grass we owned," Austin says. "It killed a ton of our herd, and that really put us in a hole. But we're coming back now, and we're getting better and recovering from that. We're starting to win again."

While the pressure to give up was strong during the hardship, the Breedings knew quitting was not an option. Turns out, they made the right decision to persevere, and all their hard work has paid off at the local, state and national levels. Some of the most notable champions were at the Fort Worth Stock Show, the American Royal, the North American International Livestock Exposition, and the National Western Stock Show (NWSS). In fact, his family took home supreme champion Hereford honors just two years ago with B&C Stock Option 6026D ET.

Other NWSS honors include champion heifer in the junior show earlier this year with the same heifer Austin took out for showmanship. Her success was not over just yet, though.



The Breeding family's determination to their Hereford cattle and the breed led them to earning the supreme champion Hereford title with B&C Stock Option 6026D ET at the 2018 NWSS.

She also earned reserve champion heifer in the JNHE bred-and-owned show. Needless to say, Denver has treated the Breeding family well from NWSS to this year's junior national — fitting since it is one of Austin's favorite shows.

Beyond the Hereford arena, Austin's hard work has paid off in many Texas major stock shows, as well. In fact, he stood reserve champion in the prestigious Fort Worth show his senior year of high school.

"I would say that's probably my largest accomplishment, being reserve in Fort Worth," he says with a grin. "My senior year was just an accomplishment in itself. I did very well. I was a reserve in Fort Worth, breed champion in San Antonio, reserve breed champion in Houston, and reserve breed champion in Austin."

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In addition to showing Hereford cattle, Austin competitively showed market steers and received reserve champion steer in the 2018 Fort Worth Stock Show.



For Austin, succeeding in the showring requires not only talent, but also hard work, determination and confidence.

Champion Senior Showman

This 19-year-old has certainly set the bar high for his four younger siblings inside and outside the showring. Fortunately, the entire family shares a passion for exhibiting high-quality cattle at the national level with style.

“Honestly if you asked myself where I see myself in 10 years, it’s probably hauling them around to shows,” he notes. “We work all the time on showing cattle. We know our cattle like the back of our hands. We know exactly what their faults are, and what their strong points are. We know how to set them up, lead them, and everything to a T.”

Strategy for success

Austin does admit the Breeding philosophy to showing cattle is different from the rest. For him it is not ideal to act like everybody else in the showring or to maintain the same stance throughout the show. Every calf and every ring is different, so it requires adjustments in setting up the cattle and poising the team — showman and animal — for the best outcome.

“You need to know your cattle. You need to know how to set them up the best to look their best,” he advises. “You need to know how to hold their head and hold their top. I think it’s all in details about the animal itself for show, not about you.”

Implementing the tried-and-true showmanship strategies passed

from generations before him proved successful and resulted in a win — but it is even more than a buckle and the prestige of a victory.

“Being able to win showmanship in that style...we don’t blend in with the others because we stand out in the way that we show,” Austin explains. “I think that was actually very meaningful. My grandpa and my dad and my Mimi, my whole family, they were really happy for me.”

Family members were not the only ones exuding joy after the championship selection. Perhaps one of Austin’s biggest fans was also quick to run up and congratulate Austin — Jarrett Worrell. The Mason, Texas, National Junior Hereford Association (NJHA) member was one of the peewee showmen looking over into the senior ring that morning and standing ringside for the final drive that evening. He and Austin were team fitting champions last year, and they have been two peas in a pod ever since. For Austin, knowing kids like Jarrett are looking up to him provides an even bigger purpose to what happens on those wood chips.

“I love Jarrett Worrell. He’s one of my little buddies,” Austin says. “That kid, he just gives me some purpose and a reason to try harder and be better. Just knowing that he looks up to me and knowing that I’m a role model for him and other kids just gives me a reason to strive harder.”

Advice for younger showmen from the champion starts with maintaining confidence, never giving up and practicing. He says it is a delicate balance between accepting criticism to improve but also not allowing the criticism to eliminate confidence.

“You’re going to make mistakes, and that’s the only way to learn,” he shares. “You’re only going to get better by doing it over and over again. You can’t let people doubt you. You have got to be confident, happy with yourself and happy with the job you do. Even if it’s not the best, you have got to know how to improve it and make it better.”

These strategies of maintaining confidence and working hard hold true in many components of life for Austin. The Texas A&M animal science sophomore has a heart for the ranching business and the ability to continue a legacy at home. Even so, he doesn’t know where exactly his passion will lead him career-wise. Austin is currently interning with Superior Livestock Auction in Ft. Worth, Texas, and claims the experience has shed new light on potential career options for him. Stay tuned — with his desire to succeed and knowledge of the industry, this young man will do many big things.

But for now Austin is simply relishing in the outcome of his hard work and dedication to the cattle industry. “To have all this success is just a blessing,” he adds. **HW**



Jarrett Worrell, Mason, Texas, was quick to congratulate Austin on the champion title.