Hit to Win

The greatest teams always seek to improve.

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Mother Nature kept pitching curve balls through what was an enduring winter for many. All I know is to keep swinging and focus on what you can control.

Along those lines you'll find a list of the top 10 Hereford sires below (Table 1), in terms of the number of their sons and daughters registered through the American Hereford Association (AHA) in 2022. Look at the average expected progeny differences (EPDs) for the bulls and where the average EPD fits in percentile rankings for each trait (Table 2).

The average values are mostly strong across the board for multi-trait excellence. Hereford breeders have answered the call to improve calving ease and growth with end-product merit. You'll find that in abundance for most of these bulls. Some also offer a high level of maternal merit, which to me, is fundamental to the long-term success of the breed. We must continue building maternal functionality into the breed and our national cow herd by using available selection tools.

Fill the gaps

In baseball, scouts talk about "five-tool players" who are above average for hitting, hitting for power, running, fielding and throwing. These players are rare. Major League Baseball players who excel in three or four of those five areas typically enjoy tremendous success, if not an eventual trip to the Hall of Fame.

Arguably, winning the World Series requires a team comprised of players possessing a mix of talents and various levels of proficiency. Part of the reality

has to do with the fact there are so few five-tool players.

Likewise, it is difficult in any breed of cattle to identify bulls well beyond breed average for all economically relative traits. However, there are complimentary Hereford sire lines and breeding programs that enable breeders to take their programs to higher levels.

There are too many multi-tool players for bulls to compete if they do only one or two things exceptionally well, or if they have a glaring hole that slows down the rest of the team. I believe that's true between breeds and within breeds.

Look at the average EPDs and percentile rankings in the table for dry matter intake (DMI) and mature cow weight (MCW). I would argue this is where we need to improve as a breed noted for efficiency.

Certainly, there are bulls in the breed to help make improvements in these areas. As a breed, we might not be able to hit the target dead on right away, but we can easily be in the ballpark within a generation or two.

Every program is unique, but we must keep raising the bar without overlooking fundamental traits. AHA search tools on *MyHerd.org* allow you to identify bulls that bend the curves.

Let's keep digging deep and continue making the next generation of Hereford cattle profitable for ourselves, our seedstock clients and our commercial cow-calf customers who are poised to knock it out of the price park as cattle numbers and beef production decline.

Best wishes this breeding season as you create your winning lineup for the upcoming sale season.

As always, keep them sound. **H**W

Table 1: Top 10 sires for AHA registrations — 2022	
Sire Name	**Reg. No.**
TH Masterplan 183F	43920493
Loewen Genesis G16 ET	43987463
Behm 100W Cuda 504C	43636764
NJW 79Z Z311 Endure 173D ET	43722088
/S Mandate 66589 ET	43834732
Boyd 31Z Blueprint 6153	43764491
UPS Sensation 2296 ET	43311175
SR Dominate 308F ET	43954712
UPS Entice 9365 ET	44058137
Innisfail WHR X651/723 4013 ET	43541960

Table 2: Average EPDs and percentile ranking of top 10 sires

Trait	CE	BW	WW	YW	DMI	SC	SCF	MM	MCE	MCW	UDDR	TEAT	CWT	BF	REA	MARB	BMI	BII	CHB
Average EPD	4.4	2.6	71	116	0.44	1.6	17.2	33	3.5	105	1.3	1.3	88	0.06	0.71	0.28	400	499	158
% Rank	42	49	10	12	75	14	36	25	35	72	28	38	20	75	19	34	22	18	17