

Ledyard drafts muscle their way to the top

BY SHEILA MILLER

HARRISBURG — Was it a case of over-confidence or just a bad gamble for the Benham brothers of Osgood, Indiana? That is one question that will probably never be answered, but it's a decision that the Benhams would probably like to reconsider.

In competition that literally put the crowd at the second annual horse pulling contest at the Farm Equipment Exposition on the edge of their seats, the Benham Brothers team of Belgian draft horses and their teamster declined their second and final pull in the heavy weight contest.

With 9200 pounds on the stone sled, the Benham team had displayed pure horse power in dragging their load a distance of 13 feet, 4 inches.

The only other team still in the contest out of the 31 that started was a team of Belgians owned and driven by Max Ledyard, of Waldron, Michigan.

In their first attempt to out-distance the Benham team, the muscle-bound equines drove in to their collars and pulled the sled 11 feet, 7 inches.

As the announcer pleaded with the crowd of spectators to "honor the pull" and not make any noise to distract the horses, the huge drafts lurched against the load at their teamster's loud "here". But, despite their valiant effort, they only succeeded in dragging the heavy load 7 feet, 11 inches.

The teamster unhitched his team and went back to his Number 30 position against the arena wall to await the Benham's final pull.

The announcer blasted through the loud speaker the Benham's decision to forfeit their final pull, and in a matter of minutes the Ledyard team was on its way back to the 9200 pound load.

Ledyard quieted his team after the evener was hitched to the sled. The horses danced, with their sides heaving and dripping with sweat.

Suddenly, the crowd witnessed a feat of strength and stamina. The Ledyard



Max Ledyard, of Waldron, Michigan, accepts the heavyweight championship trophy from Secretary Hallowell. His team of Belgians, Fred, left, and Jim, stunned the Expo crowd with their 24 foot, 3 inch pull with a load of 9200 pounds.



Robert Decker, of Garrett, was the high placing Pennsylvania team in the Friday evening heavyweight pulls. Making the presentation was Secretary of Agriculture Penrose Hallowell, right, and Assistant Secretary Chet Heim.

team gathered for the final effort and when the whistle blew, the judge measured the pull at 24 feet, 3 inches.

The crowd was on its feet and the announcer had to shout to be heard above the cheers. The Ledyard team had pulled off the championship of the Expo's heavyweight horse pull.

One of the factors that may have influenced the Benham's decision to forfeit

their last pull was, in the effort of their team's final pull, one horse fell. Several men aided the animal in its attempts to struggle to its feet without entangling itself and its teammate in harness and hooves.

The next three places in the heavyweight over 3200 pound, were taken by teams pulling 8600 pounds. In third place was George Duvall's team, from Beaver Dam, Kentucky, with a pull of 20 feet, 8 inches. Ellis Derry, Zanesville, Ohio, came in fourth with a pull of 18 feet, 1 inch. And, Bert Gilkinson, of Versailles, Kentucky, was in fifth place with 8 feet, 6 inches.

The top Pennsylvania team was owned and driven by Robert W. Decker, Garrett. Placing twelfth in the over-all contest, Decker's Belgian's dropped out of the contest with a load of 7800 pounds and a pull of 6 feet 5 inches.

In both the heavyweight and lightweight pulling contests, the teamster who displayed the best horsemanship was selected. Winner in the heavy drafts was Charles Wimler, of Durham, Connecticut, with his team Tim and Rock. Wimler has been driving horses since he was small,

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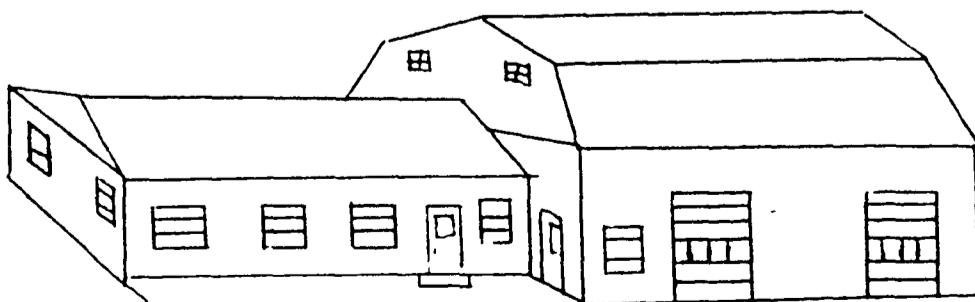
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