

Paterno Accepts \$1,000 For College Of Ag

HARRISBURG (Dauphin Co.) — Winning is a sweet reward, but receiving a \$1,000 academic scholarship for winning a football game is like double the fun.

The Nittany Lions of Penn State defeated the Terrapins from the University of Maryland earlier this season in the annual Dairy Gridiron Classic, sponsored by the Pennsylvania Dairy Promotion Program. Coach Joe Paterno accepted the scholarship money on behalf of the College of Agriculture.

The PDPP has endorsed the Dairy Gridiron Classic for five years, supporting not only inter-

collegiate athletics, but the education of youth and the development of the dairy industry.

The last three years the Land Grant Universities of Pennsylvania and Maryland played for the bragging rights. Of the three matches, Penn State won twice taking home not only the cash, but a beautiful Milkcan Trophy as well. The third game was a tie and the schools shared the money.

The college of agriculture of the winning school oversees the distribution of the funds to students needing financial assistance, who are studying dairy or food science.



Nittany Lion players (left to right) Eric Ravotli, outside linebacker; tri-captain and tackle, Matt McCartin; PDPP Board Member Shirley Womer; and cornerback, Greg Fusetti pause briefly for a photo, as the Nittany Lions claim possession of the coveted Milkcan Trophy.



PDPP Board Member Shirley Womer congratulates Penn State Nittany Lion Headcoach Joe Paterno for winning the Dairy Gridiron Classic sponsored by the PA Dairy Promotion Program. The College of Agriculture at Penn State received \$1,000 for academic scholarships as a result of the win over the University of Maryland Terrapins.

Vantage Has Advantage In Milk Production Increase

VERNON ACHENBACH, JR.
Lancaster Farming Staff

FREDONIA (Mercer County) — Vantage Jerseys of Mercer County was named the Jersey herd with the most improvement in milk production in Pennsylvania for 1990, according to records kept by the state Dairy Herd Improvement Association (Pa.DHIA).

The northwestern region of the state in which the farm lies is apparently a concentration area for those with top-notch, commercial production Jersey herds.

Donald Koontz owns and operates Vantage Jerseys and his 100 registered milking Jerseys are located in Mercer County on a 109-acre farm near the Ohio border.

In the same neighborhood as Vantage Jerseys, about 100 miles north in Erie County, is the home of this year's most improved Jersey herd for protein production, Windyfield Jerseys.

The close proximity of the two Jersey herds is not coincidence. Both operations market their milk to an Ohio cheese manufacturer.

The milk from both Jersey herds is bought by Mecili's Dairy in Cleveland, a manufacturer of mozzarella and provolone cheeses.

"In the United States, this is the best area of the country to live in, as far as the cheese market," Koontz said.

It's also a good place to see waterfowl. Pymatuning Wildlife Refuge is nearby and is a haven for ducks and Canada geese. The shore waters of Lake Erie also are important for waterfowl.

In some areas waterfowl are a problem with crop production.

"We get quite a few geese come in," Koontz said. "We always sow a winter rye crop. And when it gets any size at all, the geese are in here chewing it. So far we consider them beautiful," he said.

There are other things of beauty

to Donald Koontz, who, with his wife Angie, a fulltime hired man and a part-time helper, takes care of the 100 milking cows and an equal number of replacements.

The DHIA milk production records of Vantage Jerseys is one of those other things.

"It's considerably ahead of a goal that we set," Donald said. "We wanted to be over 17,000 (pounds of milk). Right now I think we've come up more. We're up over 17,800. The thing we have to work on now is our protein test."

Koontz said he is happy with the result shown by the DHIA records, but he is cautious to brag about it.

"Frankly, they're history and it's dollars that are most important," Koontz said.

"When you see a herd average you have no idea how much profit, but they're (DHIA records) good. It's a measurement. But I don't take it as everything."

Koontz said a number of things can be attributed to his herd's increase in milk production.

Feeding

"We've always tried to feed well. Then, about a year ago we signed on with a private nutritionist which we think has helped quite a bit," Koontz said.

"We grow our own corn silage and buy hay and grain. We have limited acres and no real desire to get into the equipment business. We till 65 acres, all in continuous corn. We have some pasture and about 13 acres of woodland."

The Koontz Jerseys are fed a total mixed ration (TMR), a practice he has done for some time.

"We were making a primitive attempt at it from day one, but only actually put in the mixer unit in 1983. We mix corn silage, chopped baled hay and custom mixed grain.

"Our grain mix is basically corn, 48 percent soy, distiller's grain, soy hulls, top grade animal fat, and

meat and bone meal," Koontz said.

"We have two rows of free stalls with a bunk in the middle. Everything we feed is done mechanically with a stationary mixer and elevators."

Breeding

Koontz said his breeding program is also important to milk production.

"I do my own breeding. Now, the last few years, we've been selecting almost totally on pounds of protein.

"We take the top 10 or 15 bulls on the USDA list and try to mate them according to type strengths and weaknesses," he said.

Sire selection is not the only important part of Koontz's breeding program.

"The calving interval right now is just short of 13 months. We've been working pretty hard on that," he said. "I have nightmares of waking up with a completely open (not bred) herd."

His heifers are all bred with artificial insemination.

The heifers are kept in a modern-style barn that is 60-feet by 1,200-feet. Additionally, the heifer area has a lean-to building for additional housing.

"Some of the heifers are on freestalls, some are on a manure pack and there are some dry cows in there also," Koontz said.

"The heifers are bred in a freestall pen and it has a rough concrete floor. The milking herd is on a grooved concrete floor that is scraped once a day.

"The heifers have access to outdoors as well, so we observe heats in both places," Koontz said.

Milking Schedule

Though it can't necessarily be attributed to any increase in milk production over the last year, Koontz said going to a three-times-daily milking schedule has helped.

"I started milking three times a day in January of '85," Koontz

said. "At the time, we wanted to hire more help, but couldn't justify it (the cost) on two times a day milking. That's why we went to three times.

"We started at probably an ideal time, when we had the herd freshened 60 to 90 days and the cows immediately jumped (in milk production) about 18 percent," Koontz said.

The milking is done in a double-four herrinbone parlor with an automatic take-off.

"The parlor was here when we moved here. We updated it," he said.

Replacement Stock

Koontz has been raising his own replacement stock for a number of years and he attributes that to adding to the high rolling herd milk production average.

The building with his barn and milking parlor is 178 feet in length. It's a freestall barn, but it also has a separate maternity facility.

Calves are started in a nine-stall calf condo. And then, when about a month old, Koontz moves them to a tie stall area where they stay for six weeks before moving them into small group pens.

"We lose very few calves, almost none. I think we lost one this summer. My wife Angie takes care of that," Koontz said. "Her main function is calves and books."

Also herd health has been a big consideration in maintaining a high milk production average.

"It's pretty much a closed herd. I recently bought a high indexed heifer, the first in three years. Three years ago I bought a heifer. Occasionally I will, but for all practical purposes, it's closed herd," Koontz said.

The reason for that is herd health.

"We've been working on health

testing, elimination of leukosis," he said.

"When we were putting the herd together, we were getting into all the problems you could get into by bringing in a large number of cows at one time," Koontz said.

"It was nothing drastic, but showed up in calf raising. When you are bringing in animals from all different backgrounds, you bring in all the viruses and parasites from those other farms. It's nothing severe, but things have been much calmer with a closed herd, health wise."

History

Koontz is not a local boy to the Mercer area.

"I moved to Fredonia in September 1979," he said. When I graduated from college, I worked for seven years on a large dairy farm in Montgomery County," he said. He then went into a partnership in Bedford County for two years and then "I located a farm in Mercer County that I could afford and that's where I'm at now."

Holsteins are the most common breed in the state, but Koontz said his particular affection with the Jersey breed goes back to his childhood.

"I guess the first reason for having Jerseys would be, I was raised with Jerseys. And secondly, especially in the last years, with the protein, there's no reason to change. And Jerseys are increasing in production."

The Future

And while things having been going well for the Koontz operation, Donald said he doesn't want to sit back and stagnate.

"We've been on the farm been 11 years. I have not checked back, but we've been in the top five in the state for nine of those years," he said.

(Turn to Page A37)