

Claycomb Takes Third Championship At Bedford

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BEDFORD (Bedford Co.) —

At 15, Nathan Claycomb has taken his third Bedford County fair championship in the market steer division.

Claycomb's 1,305 grand champion, a crossbred named Bear, brought \$3.25 per pound at the annual Junior Livestock Sale held on Saturday, August 14.

It was purchased by Hoss's Steak and Seafood House of Bedford.

Everett IGA bought the reserve champion market steer, a 1,085-pound entry owned by Jeremy Leader of Everett, for \$1.60 per pound.

Nathan is the great-grandson of Stanley Claycomb, who has had sons, grandsons, and now, Nathan, showing at the fair since 1959.

"Beef cattle are our pride and joy," said Nathan's grandad, Jim.

"Once we got a taste of that show ring, we couldn't stop. We haven't missed a year since '59."

For years, the Claycombs worked toward their goal of a state championship, and it was Nathan who brought home the honors in 1991.

Claycomb steers have also taken grand and reserve grand titles at the Keystone International competition at Harrisburg in 1990 and 1991.

"The only reason we haven't tried Louisville competition," said Jim, "is because we would have to bypass the Farm Show to do it. Champions at Louisville are sole prior to the state competition."

Joe Claycomb credits the success of Nathan's steers to a total fluke. Back in 1989, the Claycombs were at Keystone competition and, by a clerical error, were put in the wrong department. "We were with the breeding cattle," Jim said. "It was the section where cattlemen come looking for top quality steers."

"But, if it had not been for that mistake, they would not have met a seller from Ohio who asked Jim if he was interested in buying a good steer."

"Only if it's a grand champion," he said.

A few days later, Jim received a telephone call from his new acquaintance inviting him to attend a private sale at the Ohio Farm.

"They were top quality animals," Jim said. "We knew we were going to buy the minute we saw them."

Due to their success, the Claycombs did get invited back, but they hear from their seller constantly. "He's proud of our success and wants to make certain it continues," said Jim.

A large part of the championship titles can be attributed to tender, loving care. The animals get their toenails trimmed every 30 days. If it's hot, they are kept cool. If it's cool, they are kept warm.

Nathan gets his animals so tame, he leads them without a halter. Such was the case at this year's fair as the huge black animal stood calmly amidst chaos and a thunderstorm. Dropping the leash, Nathan demonstrated the control he had over the animal.

Every animal is different and the Claycombs carefully monitor the corn and oats which each gets at chow time. The boys do the feeding, but under close surveillance.

For all his hard work, Nathan now has more than \$25,000 in prize money awaiting his college education.

That's still six years down the road, but meanwhile, young cousin, Justin, age eight, is picking up the halter for the first time. Watching him admiringly from the sidelines is his younger brother, age two.

"Here we go again," Jim said with a smile.

The Claycomb family has seen farming from all aspects. The farm is so old that a cabin built in 1792 is a decorative part of the property. Dairying was their main source of income until 1972, when Stanley was elected Bedford County Commissioner.

"Dairying and politics just don't mix," he said with a laugh. "The demands on me and the demands of the cows always came at the same time, so we switched over entirely to beef."

It was a venture that paid off, at least for the grandchildren. Nathan has banked more than \$25,000 for his future education. "Right now," said Nathan, "I'm saving for a car."

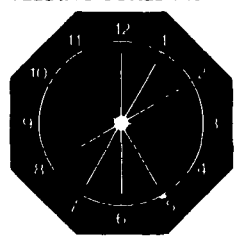


Nathan Claycomb and his champion Bedford Fair steer.

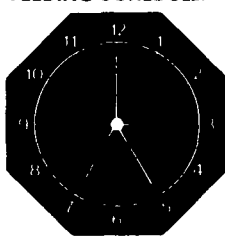
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