

Dairy Bowl Team Heading For National Contest

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STOUCHSBURG (Lebanon Co.) — Members of the senior and junior Pennsylvania dairy bowl teams met Monday at the Marion Grange Hall in Stouchsburg with coaches, some parents and Penn State University dairy specialist Dale Olver, for a final pre-trip preparation for their upcoming competition in the dairy bowl contest at the National Junior Holstein Association's annual convention in Seattle, Washington, this weekend through June 28.

The old, upstairs hall room was warm but private and members took advantage of the generosity of the Grange to support the youth. Both teams earned their respective trips to the nationals by winning first at the state level. While the results of that competition were reported, the team members have never stopped preparing themselves for the upcoming competitions. While some teenaged youth participate in organized sports or more traditional school-supported or club-related activities, these are

dairy youth. They appear to take to a dairy bowl contest with the same desire that a baseball player make take into the game. But this is the big game. The tournament final. The senior team representing Pennsylvania is from Lebanon County and consists of members Steve Bollinger, Jeffrey Hostetter, Karen Lentz, and former dairy princess Jennifer Bashore. The coaches are David Lentz and Duane Nolt. Bollinger said he was honored to be able to represent Pennsylvania. It will be his third attendance at a national convention.

"I feel pretty good. I hope we do very well. I've been practicing since November states. I took off in March and then we started twice a week in June."

He said was proud of Pennsylvania's dairy people, "From what we've accomplished in the past, where we're going and where we are right now."

Bashore said that being a member of the dairy bowl team for two years and serving as a dairy princess were complimentary roles that she hopes serve her well in helping the team attempt a national victory.

The junior team — those aged 16 or younger — representing Pennsylvania is from Berks County and consists of Erica Davis, daughter of Luther and Theresa Davis; Missy Werley, daughter of Phil and Donna Werley; and Jennifer and Mike Neiman, whose parents are Leon and Linda Neiman.

The team coach is Charlie Seidel.

"It's strong competition. Pennsylvania is lucky in having strength in the dairy community to put forward," Seidel, coach for five years, said. He said the last time a Berks County team went to nationals was in 1987 when they placed third and in 1986 when they placed second.

According to Donna Werley, the experience of the parent of a dairy bowl member is to be supportive and involved. The same is true of most of the other parents.

When they read something in a journal, newspaper or newsletter



The members of the 1994 Pennsylvania Junior Dairy Bowl Team from Berks County are, from the left, rear, Mike and Jennifer Nelman. In the front from the left are Missy Werley and Erica Davis.

that discusses changes within the Holstein Association, or some other fact about the dairy industry, or just bovines in general, that information is shared with their children.

And many parents help quiz their kids while they both do chores, such as milking.

Like playing catch. Like going over homework. Like preparing for a role in a school play.

Jennifer Neiman is team captain of the junior team and her family has a small dairy herd of about 30 Holsteins and registered Jerseys on the 28-acre homefarm. She owns 10 animals. Her brother Mike has five.

She said that altogether they farm about 100 acres to raise crops for the herd. She also said she enjoys participating in the dairy bowl contests.

"It's a good opportunity to get exposed to a lot of people and you don't have to be good at it to enjoy it. It's a lot of fun."

She said her parents support she and her brother, just as do other parents.

"They support it," she said. "If they see something in a magazine, or hear something from a vet, they'll pass it on," she said, adding that they sometimes practice while milking.

Still, with the practice, she said she was nervous. The others said the same.

"In some ways, I think I'll be more competitive (at the nationals than at other contests). Competition helps me. A little bit of nervousness helps, I think."

Parent Werley said, "I would say they have to study. They're in training all the time. These kids study basically all year."

She also said that if the parent plays a positive role, the children will do better and enjoy it more.

In addition, she said that a benefit of the competition is socializing. "The farm community is small and this is a good opportunity to develop friendships. They are having fun and learning at the same time."


Dale Olver gave the team members a pep talk Monday after the first, untimed practice round. In reality, the participants get five seconds to answer a question.

Olver told them that when they get out there, not to hole up in their hotel room the entire time studying. He told them to circulate and socialize, enjoy the convention, see the displays, etc.

"If you don't know it going into it, cramming up until the last minute isn't going to help," he said.



Members of the 1994 Pennsylvania Senior Dairy Bowl Team from Lebanon County are, from the left sitting, Jeffrey Hostetter and Steve Bollinger. Standing, from the left, are Karen Lentz and Jennifer Bashore.



MILK CHECK
THOMAS JURCHAK
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SCRANTON (Lackawanna Co.) — After a drop of only ¼ cent on the price of cheese blocks at the National Cheese Exchange on June 10, it looks like that's it for now.

What attracted all the attention was a 10-cent drop in one day on Friday the 13th last month. However, that was only half of a 21-cent drop over eight weeks since March 15, when it started.

Since (May) Friday the 13th, block prices have fallen less than 2 cents in four weeks, so it appears they have bottomed out for this spring.

Block prices went from \$1.39 to \$1.18 for a loss of 21 cents in eight weeks but we did have an unexpected increase from February 4 to April 8, when prices advanced 10 cents from \$1.30 to \$1.40, in nine weeks.

This was the out-of-season increase that came from the uncertainty among dealers of what would happen to milk production this spring.

Now they know, and the result was a dramatic drop in prices that was predicted almost weekly during March and April.

Cycles Old

Or New

Other than the dramatic Friday the 13th drop, there isn't that much difference in cheese prices this year compared to last year that provided

the double dip or twin peaks in milk prices.

This was a change in the normal cycle of low prices in the spring and high prices in the fall, and perhaps it's the beginning of a new trend, but I doubt it. It's more nearly related to milk production losses in the upper Midwest that were weather related.

There wasn't enough production from other areas to make up the difference, but that and the weather are both changing.

So, if you compare the last two years you'll find that cheese prices increased 23 cents from February to April in 1993, and this year during those same months there was a 10-cent increase.

Similarly, there was an 18-cent drop in cheese price from May to August in 1993, and this year it was 21 cents, but only took from April to June.

In all this time prices stayed within the same range, with a low around \$1.20 and a high near \$1.40 for cheese blocks.

The bottom line is that the rate of change may differ from year to year depending on milk production, but it's within these ranges of product prices that you can expect to find your milk prices in the near future.

Don't be misled by the highs or discouraged by the lows.

Here and Now

For the present, however, producers will be facing falling prices at the farm this summer.

With the Minnesota-Wisconsin Price Series falling \$1.48 to \$1.51 for May, the effect will be some lower Class prices paid by handlers.

Class I and II prices will continue increasing for May deliveries and into June for Class I prices, and by then all prices will be lower. And that won't be the end, because the M-W stands to drop another 50 cents for June.

Dairy Month

Every June Dairy Month, I'm reminded of the growth of the dairy industry in recent years.

Commercial disappearance has increased 15 billion pounds in the last 10 years. You've reached the point now where commercial sales last year exceeded your total milk production as recently as 1989.

A lot of things have contributed to this growth, but the most important was your milk production.

It may be a small consolation when your prices are falling, but then that was the reason for starting dairy promotion 57 years ago — to provide sales for increasing production.

Happy June Dairy Month.

