

Local

Dairy team preparing for competition

# Students judge bovine beauties

By SUSAN FLORENCE  
Battalion Reporter

Attractiveness, impressive style and character are what most judges look for when choosing the winner of a beauty pageant. This is also what the Texas A&M Dairy Judging Team considers when selecting the best dairy heifer.

Nine Texas A&M students are practicing 30 hours a week to prepare for upcoming dairy judging contests.

"Dairy judging is not as easy as most people think," said Dr. Chris Woelfel, team coach and dairy

specialist at Texas A&M University.

The dairy judging team practices at the Dairy Center and nearby dairies on weekends and whenever possible during the week, Woelfel said.

Most dairy judging contests require judging 10 dairy classes; five cows and five heifers. Then each team member gives oral reasons for each placing he chose. The teams judge Holstein, Jersey, Guernsey, Ayrshire and brown Swiss heifers and cows.

Team member Niles Holmes said, "Most people find judging

heifers easier than cows. With heifers you judge the body frame (but) with the cow you judge the frame and ... how good a milk cow you think she is. This is very difficult."

Woelfel said the first thing to look at when judging the frame of heifers and cows is the overall attractiveness of the body. For example, a long straight back with smooth blending of all parts is important.

The judge also must consider the cows' milking ability.

According to the Dairy Cow Unified Score Card, which is

approved by the American Dairy Science Association, the mammary system should be strongly attached and well balanced while the udder and milking bag should be of a fine texture, indicating heavy production and a long period of usefulness.

The most important part of dairy judging is the oral explanation for the placings, Woelfel said. Since student judges have to give oral reasons for their placings, they have to judge carefully and understand what they are doing, Woelfel said.

Holmes said, "I enjoyed dairy judging in high school and I always wanted to be on the Texas A&M judging team so I practiced for it before I got here."

"Most team members (belonged to) Future Farmers of America or were 4-H dairy judgers and some grew up on dairy farms; therefore, we already knew a lot about dairy cows when we came to Texas A&M."

Woelfel said Texas A&M offers a dairy science course that is recommended for all interested students. Students in this class learn to judge cattle, how dairy farms are operated and how to give written and oral reasons for their plac-

ings. This class also takes weekend trips to different Texas dairies so students can gain more judging experience.

The first judging contest will be in Memphis, Tenn. on Sept. 25. Contest members for the Memphis show are senior team members, Nancy Survace, Lee Troutman and Synthia Traweck. Junior team members are Carol Knandel, Chris Stalling, Niles Holmes and Monty Teel.

After the Memphis contest, Carol Smith, Billy Lasater, Nancy Survace and Lee Troutman will participate in the Central National Dairy Judging Contest Sept. 30.

Texas A&M also will compete in the dairy exposition in Madison, Wis. About 40 universities from across the nation will participate in the Wisconsin contest.

On the way to the contest, the team members will visit three dairy farms in Madison for judging practice, Woelfel said.

The team plans to visit the American Breeders Service in DeForest, Wis. While in Fort Atkinson, Wis., they plan to visit Hoard's Dairy Association, the National Agriculture Supply Company and the Dairy Shrine Museum, he said.

# Ex-gymnast learns to cope with paralysis

By TOM SOLOMON  
Battalion Reporter

Mark Sterle was a gymnast. He had worked years to develop the art of muscle control. He mastered intricate body positions that required great concentration and near-perfect timing.

Then one night he back-flipped to a trapeze, partially severing his spinal cord. "I was just screwing around, doing something that I couldn't have been doing. I screwed up and I hurt myself," Sterle said.

Now Sterle depends on a 150-pound electric wheelchair to take him where he wants to go. Paralyzed from the neck down, Sterle cannot feed or dress himself. Lumbering mats and parallel bars are all but forgotten.

But Sterle hasn't given up — he still enjoys life.

A senior computer science major at Texas A&M University, Sterle has adapted to a new way of life in the three and a half years since his accident.

He jokes and refers to himself as "gimp," a slang term for wheelchair-bound paraplegics and quadriplegics that could be an insult if used too loosely by those who are not close friends of the handicapped.

Sterle, 22, was living in the Chippendale area when he had his accident.

"I was in the hospital for half a year after (the accident)," he said. "When I got out, I couldn't cut down at home, so I went to college."

He started classes at Southern Illinois University, which he attended until his family moved to Austin. Then he came to Texas A&M.

Southern Illinois University is set up for wheelchairs a lot better than A&M," he said. "All my classes were scheduled on the ground floor so I wouldn't have to mess with elevators."

The main thing they have that our school doesn't have is a wheelchair repair clinic. If this chair breaks there is nobody to fix it within 600 or 700 miles of here."

But Sterle said new buildings at Texas A&M are being designed to be more accessible for handicapped students, particularly students in wheelchairs. "It's easier to get to classes," he said.

They've also got the Veterans Administration Office and a testing service where I can take tests

orally," he said. "That way I don't have to find people to help me take written tests."

Sterle's electric wheelchair is a complicated piece of machinery. "I was one of the first people to really use this chair," Sterle said. "I've had it for three years and I was the first gimp to take this type of chair out on campus and (use) it every day," he said.

Sterle operates the chair by blowing into or sucking air from a tube that runs to a pneumatic switch and a set of relays connected to the chair's motor.

The tube also is hooked up to a modified garage door opener-radio transmitter. With this and a receiver in his room in Crocker Hall, Sterle can operate his television, dial his telephone, turn his stereo off and on, and operate the computer terminal he has in his room to help him with his computer science classes.

Sterle is aided by two attendants who get him up in the morning, bathe him and dress him for class. "They work alternate days," he said. "It gets to be too much work for one person to do (every day)."

Although he is paralyzed from the neck down, he can write or use an eraser by holding a set of "mouthsticks" between his teeth. He holds the mouthsticks be-

tween his teeth and a clamp at the other end of the mouthsticks holds the pencil or eraser.

"With the mouthsticks I can write, turn the pages of a book or type a program on the computer terminal," he said.

Sterle said he has a satisfying social life: "I go to a movie every once in a while. I like to go to concerts. Mostly I just sit in the room and drink beer with whoever comes to visit," he said.

"Yeah, I miss the chicks," Sterle said about not having dates. "But after a while you know what's happening and you just don't worry about it," he said.

Sterle says he has gotten used to the attention he gets as he travels around campus in his wheelchair. Occasionally he will see someone staring at him. He doesn't let the gawkers bother him, though. "I stare back at them," he said with a smile.

"Actually, this semester I've found that if I have a more relaxed attitude toward people's reactions to me, they stay more relaxed around me."

"I remember seeing somebody in a wheelchair before I got hurt, and now I can understand how people can react to something that's unusual to them. Now I've found myself in the same position."

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