** This news release from K-State Research and Extension is available online at https://ksre-learn.com/livestock-judging-national-champs

Note to editors: A photo to accompany this story is at https://www.flickr.com/photos/ksrecomm/54151568641

Released: Nov. 19, 2024

K-State rallies to win National Collegiate Livestock Evaluation Contest

Klaudt nabs overall national win by four points

By Pat Melgares, K-State Research and Extension news service

LOUISVILLE, Kentucky – Kansas State University survived a pair of nail-biting finishes on Tuesday to win the team and individual titles at the 119th National Collegiate Livestock Judging contest, which pits the nation's top collegiate livestock judges in cattle, swine and sheep/goat competitions.

Senior Jacob Klaudt (Beulah, North Dakota) scored 964 points for a four-point win over Oklahoma State's Anna Hannon. K-State's team win was nearly as close; the squad scored 4,770 points among its five competing members to edge Oklahoma State at 4,763.

Oklahoma State was the three-time defending national champion entering this year's contest, which was held at the North American Livestock Exposition in Louisville, Kentucky.

"A win like this doesn't happen without everyone, so each student on the team pushing and encouraging each other led to the result," said Payton Dahmer, who is in his first year of coaching the K-State team. "In particular, the team's consistency at the national contest was remarkable. Having all five contestants in the top 15 overall is ultimately what helped them in a tight race."

In addition to Klaudt's overall win, K-State's team title was powered by top 15 finishes from Cole Murphy (Houstonia, Missouri) sixth; Logan Buhrman (Wisner, Nebraska) seventh; Kyla Mennen (Logansport, Indiana) eighth; and Ty Knodle (Fillmore, Illinois) 14th.

Led by Hannon, Oklahoma State finished second through fifth in the individual standings, but K-State's five-person depth was the key to the slim victory.

"The team win means the most to me considering the group of people I got to enjoy it with," Klaudt said. "All of us are transfer students who were on different teams a year ago. Those teams were competitive, but not to this degree. Ultimately, winning at this magnitude and level consistently and at the American Royal (earlier this fall) is incredibly special for us."

Dahmer added: "Jacob is one of the most dedicated, passionate kids I've ever been around and today was the culmination of years of hard work. But just like Jacob, his teammates have put forth years of effort to the sport of livestock judging. These students have given up nearly every weekend and countless hours each week for the last year to achieve this goal."

In individual competition by species, Klaudt had the top score in sheep/goat judging, and was sixth in cattle and eighth in swine. As a team, K-State had the top scores in sheep/goats and swine, and the second best score in cattle.

Klaudt, who has been in competitive livestock judging for 10 years, said he had not been as consistent in past years, but made a vow to "tighten up the loose ends and lock in" during his senior year in college.

"In turn," he said, "this past year has been the best card making I've ever done. I've spent a lot of extra hours working on sets of reasons and fine-tuning my evaluation skills. To end on top is something I will thank God and my coaches for – for a long time coming."

Following the awards ceremony on Nov. 19, a past winner of the national contest shook his hand and said, "Welcome to the Club."

"It's a pretty cool deal to be part of this, and something I'll always appreciate," Klaudt said.

This year's win marks the 16th national championship for K-State in livestock judging, including a record-setting streak of five consecutive from 1994 to 1998. Before this year, K-State's most recent national win was in 2020.

In addition to the livestock judging competition, K-State seniors Kylie Schakel (Atlanta, Indiana), Bailey Lavender (Branford, Florida) and Quinna Molden (Middletown, Virginia) were recognized with the All American Livestock Judging award, honoring students who have excelled in academic performance, university and industry activities and community service.

This is the 25th year that collegiate All Americans have been named during the national contest.

"These young ladies are great representatives of the dedication it takes to be successful within education, their community and livestock evaluation," Dahmer said. "The 2024 team took a chance on a young, first year head coach. For this, I am beyond grateful they put their trust in K-State and our staff to help them achieve their goals."

More information on K-State's livestock judging team is available online from the Department of Animal Sciences and Industry.

-30-

FOR PRINT PUBLICATIONS: Links used in this article

National Collegiate Livestock Judging Contest,
https://www.facebook.com/NationalCollegiateLivestockJudging

K-State Department of Animal Sciences and Industry (livestock judging), https://www.asi.k-state.edu/studentsuccess/judgingteams/livestock

Story by:
Pat Melgares
melgares@ksu.edu