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## **Category: Entering Pageants**

### **Is it time to check your attitude?**

It's a basic fact of life you win some, you lose some. When you blame others for your loss and attempt to bring winners, coordinators and judges down you're really only bringing down your own reputation. Take a loss for what it is, you didn't bring your best game and someone else did. Learn from the experience and move on. Being a gracious loser is as equally important as being a gracious winner, and perhaps at times more so.

I am deeply disappointed in what seems to be a more common occurrence these days - contestants and their parents (specifically mothers) throwing what can only be described as full fledged tantrums when they don't earn a title. Perhaps due to social media we're just more aware of this behavior.

Before reading on please ponder this - How can a contestant sit in an interview, speak in public during an impromptu question session or speak with fans about how wonderful rodeo is because everyone is so supportive of their fellow contestants and then, when she doesn't win, blame everyone else but herself? Why is the queen pageant any different than the bareback riding or the goat tying or the barrel racing? It's not, and it's time queen contestants, their mothers and at times their supporters, realize this.

When a contestant loses a title 99.9% of the time it is not due to politics and crooked judges. Why do contestants not earn titles? Here are a few reasons:

- They didn't study enough. – Their knowledge of the rodeo they are competing to represent is inadequate including not knowing performance times, ticket prices, committee members and officers and other information that is readily available to study. They are not familiar with the requirements of the title and are not prepared to go into the public and bring spectators into the stands. They are not familiar with current events or are incapable of piecing together an answer that is even remotely related to the question they've been asked.
- They lack grace and polish. – Some are blessed with the ability to glide through a fashion show but for many they need to practice, practice and practice this skill down every grocery store aisle they step foot in. Their make-up is barely negligible, their posture is slouched, their hair needs to be styled and their grammar needs to be improved. These are details that are very important.

- They perform poorly in horsemanship – Even life time riders need lessons, especially if they have not been in the show ring and haven't learned the finer points of showing off their skills. A contestant may break the pattern, which for many judges is an automatic "you're not going to win horsemanship". They allow their nerves to get the best of them which transfers to their horses leading to a less than stellar ride.
- Their clothing was ill fitting, did not reflect a Western flair, was dirty, not up to date and/or they did not pay attention to a myriad of tiny details that make a big difference.
- They simply don't "click" with the judges. – This is where the human element comes into play with judging pageants. Not all judges are going to have an instant connection with every contestant just like they are not going to have an instant connection with every other person they meet in their day to day lives.

Maybe the problem stems from our society's fascination with drama filled reality TV and the 'everyone's a winner no matter how poorly they perform' mentality. I'm a parent and I'm pretty proud of my over-achieving son. However, I realize he's not perfect and not everyone is going to like him (he's a teenager and even \*I\* don't like him sometimes!). I realize he has faults and flaws and he's not going to be everyone's cup of tea. He's not going to win every competition he enters, sometimes because he failed to prepare and didn't bring his A-game or because the judges just didn't like his style or the way he performed. He's going to be rejected, he's going to fail. And that's okay because he needs to understand that it's okay to not be number one every time and that life really is not fair. He also needs to know that he can fight his own fights and does not need me there holding his hand and taking over the situation.

I also know as a pageant coordinator that my titleholder isn't perfect and not everyone is going to like her as much as I do. No matter how nice I think she is and no matter how much I support her she isn't going to win every pageant she enters after her reign is finished with my title. And that is also okay.

The horse world is a small one; the rodeo ambassador world is even smaller. If you plan to continue competing for titles you must think about your actions and how they will affect your future relationships with coordinators, contestants, titleholders and judges. As a contestant do you really want to go into a pageant with a coordinator that has heard of, or seen firsthand, your reputation as a sore loser? Do you really think a rodeo committee is going to want you to represent their rodeo with as much baggage as some contestants and titleholders carry around? Do you really want your daughter to be known as the contestant/queen whose mom caused her membership to be revoked from an association because of her mom's poor behavior when she didn't win?

It's also worth noting that whom you choose to align yourself with will also affect your reputation. Be careful to make your own decisions and to not allow yourself to be pulled into the drama of others. Form your own opinions from your own experiences. Take what others say about a pageant/coordinator/judge/queen with a grain of salt and realize that each of us has a different experience and take on events and people. Unfortunately we far too often find pockets of drama-makers who aren't happy unless they are always in the limelight, no matter what they have to do to

keep themselves there including causing major (usually unfounded) issues for other titleholders, contestants, judges and coordinators.

So contestants, and moms, the ball is in your court now. If you compete again are you going to learn from past experiences and make improvements to your game or are you going to go in with the same game plan then complain and throw a fit when you don't win? Are you prepared to face the fact that you asked to be judged and critiqued? Are you prepared to swallow your pride and realize you truly may not have brought your A-game to the contest or that another contestant really was a better choice for the title? And finally, would you behave this way if you were not hired for a paying job with the local CO-OP, McDonalds or a Fortune 500 company? Probably not and you shouldn't with a rodeo queen pageant either.

